Orientalist Discourse of the Chinese in Early Colonial Australia

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By

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Declaration:

This sub-thesis is entirely my own work.

I have duly identified, acknowledged and cited all the sources and materials used in this sub-thesis according to the accepted academic practice.

Signed : _____

Date : 1 June 2007

Abstract

This thesis argues that discordant relations between the Europeans and the Chinese in Australia can be explained not only in terms of the framework of racism but also in terms of what Edward Said identifies as discourse of Orientalism. In the hearts and minds of the European setters, Orientalist knowledge of the Chinese reinforced the belief that the Chinese were culturally different, primitive, inferior, vicious, savage, and morally reprehensible. In developing this argument, this thesis will look at how official government documents, newspapers, and periodicals 'Orientalised' and consequently, vilified the Chinese. This thesis will cover the period beginning 1837, when the idea of coolie immigration was first advanced, to 1854, when the New South Wales legislature decisively opposed all forms Asian immigration

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Table of Contents

Introduction

The Chinese diaspora, according to the writer Lynn Pan, is a result of the most extensive and longest-running chain of migrations by one nation.[1] It spans several centuries and the five continents, and involves tens of millions of people. Historically, it is said to have begun with the establishment of small settlements along the Southeast Asian junk trade route in 15th century CE, or according to some historians, even much earlier—to the Chinese occupation of Vietnam in the 3rd Century BCE.[2] The 'floodtide', however, started only in 1848 following a complicated series of local and international events that effectively put China under severe social, political and economic strains.[3] It came to a peak in the 1850s, during the Californian and Australian gold rushes, and the expansion of Western colonialism in Southeast Asia, the Pacific, the West Indies, Africa, and Central and South America.[4] It slowed down four decades later, in 1888, when national boundaries were tightened by states who were threatened by the influx of Chinese immigrants.[5] In between these two critical junctures, no less than two million people left China, temporarily or permanently.[6] The dispersal of the Chinese continued well even after 1888, until emigration was unceremoniously put on a temporary hold by the Communist Chinese Government in 1949. When China reopened to the world in the late 1970s, the diaspora resumed and persists to this very day. In 1990, *Population and Development Review* has estimated that there are around 37 million overseas Chinese residing in 136 countries worldwide.[7]

There is so much to be told about the history of the Chinese diaspora. It is, for one, a remarkable and often touching story of human movement across time and space, of human achievements and failures, of fighting, mastering, and succumbing to different adversities, of adaptation, assimilation and integration to alien environments, peoples, and cultures. It tells the story of all the hopeful, as well as the hopeless, immigrants who

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[1] Lynn Pan, Sons of the Yellow Emperor: A History of the Chinese Diaspora, (New York: Kondasha America, 1994), p. 375.
[2] Pan, Sons of the Yellow Emperor, pp. 3-22. C.P. Fitzgerald, The Southern Expansion of the Chinese People: Southern Fields and Southern Ocean, (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1972): 1-2.
[3] Pan, Sons of the Yellow Emperor, p. 43. For a brief summary of these local and domestic events, see p. 43-44.
[4] Ibid., pp. 43-57, and pp. 61-83.
[5] Ibid., pp. 128-152.
[6] Ibid., p. 43.
[7] Dudley Ponston, Michael Xinxiang Mo, Mei-Yu Yu, "The Global Distribution of the Overseas Chinese Around 1990," Population and Development Review, 20/3 (September 1994), p. 631. The term 'overseas Chinese' refers to Chinese nationals and also to foreign-born Chinese who readily identified themselves as Chinese.

braved the uncertainty of the future in an alien land, of the fateful sojourners who endured thousands of miles of treacherous sea crossings just to get a new lease in life, of the innovative spirits of immigrant-pioneers who braved unknown terrains and uncharted frontiers, of the enterprising farmers, cultivators, miners and workers who often had to toil in harsh and hostile environment in order to preserve not their own self but their family lineage.

The Chinese diaspora, however, is, more often than not, a story of human frailties. It is a story of deception and exploitation, of families being forcefully separated by vicious labour agents, of impoverished peasants and workers being cajoled or misled into migrating, of illiterate immigrants living a life of perpetual bondage and slavery because of unjust contracts and employment systems, of Chinese gang leaders taking advantage of the misery and poverty of their fellow Chinese by luring them into opium and other pain alleviating vices.[8] It is a sad story of bigotry, intolerance, and violence, of the discriminations and the injustices which these immigrants had to endure from their hosts, of the rights and privileges that were denied to them, of always being seen as an outsider and a suspect, of the conflicts, of the assaults on their persons and properties, of the senseless killings that were perpetrated because of the fact that they were Chinese.

The current students of the history of Chinese Australian diaspora are well aware of the wrongs committed by the white Australian settlers against the Chinese. Indeed, historian Barry McGowan has of late complained that '[up] until recently, the treatment of European-Chinese race issue by most historians has been a highly distorted and unrelenting tale of woe. Invariably the discussion has focused on racial conflict, with the European[s]...portrayed as incorrigibly racist and violent, and the Chinese...by contrast, as hapless and submissive victims.'[9] But this was not always the case. In fact, until 1960, Australian historians generally glossed over the Chinese in historical

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[8] In 1859, the British Consul, Rutherford Alcock lamented that some Chinese labour recruiters had resorted to kidnapping as a means of procuring labourers for workplaces overseas. June Mei, "Socioeconomic Origins of Emigration: Guangdong to California, 1850-1882," in Modern China, 5/4 (October 1979), pp.478-480. Lynn Pan also narrates of several instances when labourers were deliberately misled into signing contracts with the wrong information. In the Chinese version of the contracts, the wages and benefits were much higher compared to the English version. See Pan, Sons of the Yellow Emperor, pp. 47-48. For a discussion of Chinese gang activities, see Leon Comber, Chinese Secret Societies in Malaya: A Survey of Triad Society from 1800 to 1900, (New York: Association of Asian Studies, 1959), and James Warren, Rickshaw Coolie: A People's History of Singapore, (London: Oxford University Press, 1986).

[9] Barry McGowan, "The Chinese on the Braidwood Goldfields: Historical and Archaeological Opportunities," Journal of Australian Colonial History, 6 (2004), p. 36.

narratives.[10] If they mentioned the Chinese, this was always in reference to the gold rush or the development of White Australia Policy. And if ever they mentioned the ill-treatment of the Chinese at all, this was to justify and defend the actions of the white Australians. The inclusion of the Chinese in historical studies came only in the midst of anti-racism campaign in Australia in the 1960s. Historians began to explore the white Australians' unjust treatment of the Chinese, particularly, their panic stricken responses to Chinese immigration, in order to moralise and condemn racism and the racist White Australia Policy.[11] Not surprisingly, this new research agenda commonly emphasized the Australians' racist attitudes, their violent behaviours, bigotry, and irrational fear of the Chinese. It is largely sympathetic to the Chinese. It depicts them as victims of virulent racism, discrimination, intolerance, and aggression.

This thesis completely acknowledges the immense contribution of this new research agenda in deepening the understanding of the history of the Chinese in Australia. It inevitably brought to light the many miserable experiences of the diaspora Chinese in Australia. It generated landmark studies that illuminated the often thorny relations between the dominant white Australian population and the Chinese minority. It also produced important insights on the psychological, social, economic, political dynamics of the Australian variant of anti-Sinicism. But this research agenda has its downside, too. In the first place, the emphasis it put on racism has, to a great extent, limited the conceptual framework of scholars. Historian Kathryn Cronin's reading of white Australian-Chinese rivalry is a good example. She said: 'Racial ideas and stereotypes underlay *all* colonial thinking on the Chinese question. These beliefs...provided the categories of thought that shaped the colonists' experiences, inhibiting certain types of thinking and facilitating others...[my emphasis]'[12] Cronin's strict adherence to the framework of racism is clearly limiting. It prevented her from seeing the Chinese Australian experience outside this rather limited framework of racism.

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[10] Jan Ryan, while acknowledging that histories of Chinese in Australia have grown in recent years, lamented that the Chinese remain excluded in Australian 'grand national histories'. The 'token fragments' given to the Chinese, she said, 'retain familiar stereotypes of Chinese as a homogenous "race", a detached entity, with a separate and alien indentiy. By such inclusion, they remain excluded.' Jan Ryan, "Chinese Australian History," in Wayne Hudson and Geoffrey Bolton, editors, Creating Australia: Changing Australian History, (St.Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 1997), p. 71.

[11] Jennifer Cushman, "'A Colonial Casualty': The Chinese Community in Australian Historiography," Asian Studies Association of Australia Review, 7/3 (April 1984): 100-113. See also Andrew Markus, "Chinese in Australian History," Meanjin, 42/1 (March 1983): 85-93.

[12] Kathryn Cronin, Colonial Casualties: Chinese in Early Victoria, (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1982), p. 79.

This thesis aims to show that there are approaches to the discordant relations between the white Australians and the Chinese which are equally relevant other than racism. What Edward Said identifies as Orientalism is one conceptual framework whose value and relevance this thesis will endeavour to prove.[13] It argues that the source of anti-feelings in Australia is rooted not on the ideas of race and racial hierarchies alone, but also on the prevailing Orientalist knowledge of the Chinese. This knowledge of the Chinese, it will be pointed out, has vilified the Chinese in the hearts and minds of colonial Australians by reinforcing the belief that the Chinese were culturally different, primitive, inferior, vicious, savage, and morally reprehensible. In developing this argument, this thesis looks at how official government documents, newspapers, and periodicals 'Orientalised' and consequently, antagonised the Chinese. This thesis covers the period beginning 1837, when the idea of coolie immigration was first advanced, to 1854, when the Legislative council of New South Wales legislative decisively opposed all forms Asian immigration. This period was crucial to the development of anti-Chinese feelings in Australia—it was during this time when the foundations of anti-Chinese attitudes were first laid. This thesis is organised as follows: Chapter 1 surveys the existing histories of the Chinese in Australia; Chapter 2 essays the conceptual limitations of these histories, and then offers Orientalism as an alternative framework to the understanding of anti-Chinese sentiments in Australia; Chapter 3 locates the origins of the Orientalist knowledge of the Chinese, and finally, Chapter 4 charts the discursive path of this Orientalist knowledge beginning 1840 until 1854.

[13] Edward Said, Orientalism, (London: Penguin Books, 1978).

Chapter 1
The Historiographies of the Chinese in Australia

This chapter traces the development of historical writings on the Chinese, and at the same time, addresses the key historiographical themes and debates, as well as the dominant methodological approaches employed by scholars. It demonstrates that the interpretation and points of view of scholars have been, to a great extent, informed by the prevailing politics of the period in which they were written, and by the changing attitudes of Australians towards the Chinese and non-Europeans. It concludes by citing the interpretative limitations of existing scholarship.

Historiography of the Chinese in Australia Before the Second World War

Despite the fact that the Chinese have featured much in Australian political life since the second half of the 19th century, it was not until 1923 that a systematic study of their community first appeared.[1] Ironically, this study was not even concerned with the Chinese *per se*, nor was it interested in their Australian experience. The author, historian Myra Willard, was primarily interested in the history of the White Australia policy, and she viewed the Chinese through that policy. Her sources, which were limited to contemporary Australian materials, likewise constrained her from looking beyond the Australian side of the story. Besides, Willard had a political purpose in mind, which effectively coloured her account of the Chinese.[2] Her political stance is discernible if one paid close attention to the context in which the book was written and published. Four years before the book appeared, the fundamental principle of the White Australia policy was seriously challenged when Japan nearly convinced the delegates to the 1919 Paris Peace Conference of the merits of its racial equality proposal.[3] Willard was well

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[1] Myra Willard, History of the White Australia Policy to 1920, 2nd edition (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1967, first edition published 1923). See Andrew Markus, "Chinese in Australian History," p. 87.

[2] The close relationship between politics and the production of historical knowledge was first brought into question by the French thinker, Michel Foucault. Foucault argued that history is a highly political and a highly politicized discipline. History, therefore, cannot be an impartial source of illumination. According to him, the formation, accumulation and the dispersion of historical knowledge are influenced and shaped by a host of different social and political factors. See Richard J. Evans, In Defence of History, (London: Granta Books, 1997), p. 195.

[3] Japan's racial equality proposal asserted that: "The equality of nations as being a basic principle of the League of Nations, the High Contracting Parties agreed to accord as soon as possible to all alien nationals of states, members of the League, equal and just treatment in every respect making no distinction, either in law or in fact, on account of their race and nationality." Naoko Shimazu, Japan, Race and Equality: The Racial Equality Proposal of 1919, (London: Routledge Press, 1998), p. 20. The Australian delegation headed by Prime Minister Billy Hughes reacted strongly against this proposal, seeing it as a sinister attempt by Japan to eventually demand unrestricted immigration of non-European nationals into

aware of this recent threat to the vision of White Australia posed by the Japanese and their sympathisers, and she referred this incident in her book to illustrate how the world had completely misunderstood the 'object of Australia's policy'.[4] Lamenting that 'Australia's policy does not as yet seem to be generally understood and sanctioned by world opinion,' Willard hoped that her book would manage to explain and clarify the issues that 'tend to obscure the real object of [the White Australia] policy.'[5]

Willard's real motive went beyond the urge to explain and clarify, however. As an apologist for White Australia, what she really wanted to do was to justify the continued existence of the country's highly restrictive immigration policy. After all, if she could successfully demonstrate that the policy was indeed standing on solid ethical and moral grounds, there should be no reason for Australia's claim not to be universally recognized.[6] Convinced that the White Australia policy was essential to 'Australia's national unity and progress', Willard aimed to win the international observers, particularly Australia's critics, to her side by appealing to the fundamental right of nations to national self-preservation—apparently, a right no nation-state could afford to deny or refute. 'The fundamental reason for the adoption of the White Australia policy,' she argued, 'is the preservation of a British-Australian nationality.'[7] This principle would assure the 'validity and morality of Australia's policy' especially since the 'demand of peoples for self-realisation...[and] preservation of their identity has been more and more admitted.'[8] She asserted that Australians opposed the immigration of non-Europeans not because of 'any idea of the inferiority of mentality and physique of the excluded people' but because these immigrants threatening their legitimate aspiration for national unity.[9] National unity, Willard stressed, would be possible if the British character of Australia could be preserved and protected for posterity.

Australia, pp 123-125. Shimazu further surmised that Hughes opposed the racial equality proposal to gain political ground back home, pp. 130-135. After much lobbying by Australia, Britain and the United States, the Conference quashed the proposal. See also Neville Meaney, "The End of 'White Australia' and Australia's Changing Perceptions of Asia, 1945-1990," Australian Journal of International Affairs, 49/2 (November 1995): 175-176, and David Johanson, "History of the White Australia Policy," in Kenneth Rivett, editor, and the Immigration Reform Group, Immigration: Control or Colour Bar: The Background to 'White Australia' and a Proposal for Change, (Carton: Melbourne University Press, 1962), p. 19.

[4] Willard, History of White Australia Policy, p. 211.

[5] Ibid., p. 210.

[6] Ibid., pp. 210-211.

[7] Ibid., pp. 188-189.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid., pp. 189-191.

Willard's polemic was not entirely new. In fact, American and Australian political scientists had been arguing the same since the last decade of the 19th century. Columbia University Professor John Burgess, for example, taught as early as 1890 that:

> national unity is the determining force in the development of the modern constitutional states. The prime policy, therefore, of each of these states should be to attain proper physical boundaries and to render its population ethnically homogeneous...It is the highest duty of the state to preserve, strengthen and develop its national character.[10]

At the turn of 20th century Australia, constitutionalists John Quick and Robert Garran similarly argued that political stability is heavily dependent on the country's ethnically homogeneous population. Since the highest duty of a government to its citizens is to 'preserve its own existence, its own healthful growth, and development,' Quick and Garran reasoned that 'it may [also] righteously deport hostile elements in order to shield the vitals of the state from the forces of dissolution and to protect its nationality against the deleterious influences of foreign immigration.' [11] Willard confirmed the validity of these observations by citing concrete examples of how the influx of Chinese coolies and miners into Australia resulted in racial strife.[12] Fortunately, she continued, the 'Australians adopted their policy early,' and thus avoided the bitter racial divisions which haunted the American South, and which even led to the disintegration of the Austrian Empire.[13]

For nearly forty years, the arguments and interpretations set out by Willard prevailed as the unchallenged orthodoxy in the study of the history of White Australia policy.[14] Her arguments against Chinese immigration, and her representations of the Chinese as 'threats to Australia's national unity', 'unassimilable', 'aliens in ideas and habits' and 'competitors to scarce resources' also became the recurrent themes in the history of the Chinese in Australia.[15] Andrew Markus attributed Willard's uncontested reign as the foremost historian of White Australia to the lack of research interest on the

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[10] John Burgess, Political Science and Comparative Constitutional Law, Volume 1: Sovereignty and Liberty, (New York: Ginn and Company, 1890), pp. 40-44, quoted in Marilyn Lake, "White Man's Country: The Trans-National History of a National Project," Australian Historical Studies, 34/122 (October 2003), p. 358.

[11] John Quick and Robert Garran, The Annotated Constitution of the Australian Commonwealth, (Sydney: Legal Books, 1976, first published in 1901), p. 623, quoted in Lake, "White Man's Country", p. 358.

[12] Willard, History of White Australia Policy, pp. 207-210.

[13] Ibid., pp. 207-210.

[14] Markus, "Chinese in Australian History," p. 87.

[15] Willard, History of White Australia Policy, p. 190.

topic as well as to the uncritical attitude towards the policy in general.[16] It should be noted that, until 1960, Australian popular opinion remained strongly in favour of a White Australia.[17] Given the general intellectual mood of the period, scholars apparently found little motivation to contradict Willard.

The essays of historians K.M. Dallas and N. Bede Nairn on the subject were testimonies to Willard's enduring influence on the historical practice of 1950s Australia. Dallas, in tracing the origin of White Australia, reiterated Willard's earlier assertion that the opposition to Chinese and coloured labour arose not because of racial antipathy.[18] The main reason, Dallas believed, was far more basic: that is, the protection of the 'bread and butter' of ordinary working Australians from the degrading and demoralising presence of cheap but 'sub-standard' Chinese and other coloured labour.[19] He likened anti-Chinese actions to the workers' earlier resistance against transportation. Like the opposition to the convicts, he argued, the opposition to the Chinese 'arose from circumstances in which their distinctive characteristics exposed [them] to exploitation.'[20] Nairn, meanwhile, followed up on Willard's 'preservation of British-Australian nationality' thesis to argue that the White Australia policy emerged as a by-product of Australian nationalism: particularly, of the 'idea of nationhood on the British model', that is, as a democratic society.[21] This idea of nationhood, he insisted, necessarily excluded Chinese and other non-Europeans because they were incapable of participating in the type of democratic society that was evolving in Australia around 1850. The Chinese were too strange and too different to fit into this society. More importantly, they could not exercise effective Australian citizenship because they demonstrated no 'glimmer of interest in democracy'.[22]

The Anti-Racism Movement and the Writing of Chinese Australian History

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[16] Markus, "Chinese in Australian History," p. 87.
[17] See Jamie Mackie, "The Politics of Asian Immigration" in James Coughlan and Deborah McNamara, editors, Asians in Australia: Patterns of Migration and Settlement, (South Melbourne: MacMillan Education Australia Pty. Ltd., 1997): 10-48, and Andrew Markus, "1984 or 1901? Immigration and Some 'Lessons' of Australian History," in Andrew Markus and M.C. Ricklefs, editors, Surrender Australia: Essays in the Study and Uses of History, (Sydney: George Allen and Unwin, 1985): 10-35.
[18] K.M. Dallas, "The Origins of 'White Australia'," The Australian Quarterly, 27/1 (March 1955): 43-52.
[19] Ibid., p. 43.
[20] Ibid., p. 49.
[21] Noel Bede Nairn, "A Survey of the History of the White Australia Policy in the 19th Century," The Australian Quarterly, 28/3 (September 1956), p. 16.
[22] Ibid., p. 25.

The aftermath of Second World War brought important changes to the way Australians thought about the White Australia policy.[23] The horrors of Hitler's anti-Semitic activities in Europe created strong awareness of the evils of racism. In Australia, this awareness evoked strong concern for the policy's discriminatory practices.[24] Church lobby groups such as the Methodist Conference and the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church condemned it as being 'racially offensive'.[25] Others even likened it to Nazism.[26] Meanwhile, the forced repatriation of wartime refugees from Asia and the exclusion of non-European brides of Australian servicemen drew widespread public attention to the 'cruel administration of the policy.'[27] The convivial wartime experiences of Australians diggers with their Asian allies also inspired some to question the claims of White Australia. One politician, for example, countered the earlier charge against the Chinese as being unfit for democracy, saying, 'If the Chinese were good enough to fight for democracy, they were good enough to live in democratic Australia.'[28]

This growing public outcry against the White Australia policy received support from the international scientific community which, coincidentally, was also beginning to question the validity of the scientific theory of race.[29] And when this theory was finally declared scientifically unsound by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Committee of Experts on Race Problems in 1952, several scholars summoned enough courage to criticise the racist aspects of the policy without the fear of being ostracised as 'unpatriotic' or un-Australian.[30] Carlotta Kellaway, for one, boldly challenged the policy despite its being 'a matter of national faith, infused with all the fervour of an almost religious expanding nationalism'.[31] She rejected the conventional explanation that the policy came about because of the need to

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[23] Markus, "Chinese in Australian History," p. 87. Johanson, "History of the White Australia Policy," pp. 26-27. Ann Curthoys, "Chineseness and Australian Indentity," in Henry Chan, Ann Curthoys, and Nora Chiang, editors, The Overseas Chinese in Australia: History, Settlement and Interactions, (Taipei: Interdisciplinary Group for Asian Studies, National Taiwan University; Canberra: Centre for the Study of Chinese Southern Diaspora, Australian National University; 2001), p. 16.

[24] Johanson, "History of the White Australia Policy," p. 25. See also Meaney, "The End of 'White Australia Policy," p. 178.

[25] Johanson, "History of the White Australia Policy," p. 26.

[26] Ibid., p. 25.

[27] Ibid., pp. 26-28. See also Markus, "Chinese in Australian History," p. 87.

[28] Johanson, "History of the White Australia Policy," p. 25.

[29] See Warwick Anderson, The Cultivation of Whiteness: Science, Health and Racial Destiny in Australia, (New York: Warwick Books, 2003), pp. 225-252.

[30] Carlotta Kellaway, "'White Australia'—How Political Reality Became National Myth," The Australian Quarterly, 25/2 (June 1953), p. 7

[31] Ibid., p. 7.

protect Australia from the demoralising presence of cheap Chinese labour.[32] According to Kellaway, historians simply missed the point because they have 'often become too much involved in the traditional doctrine which has stultified their powers of observation and critical analysis.'[33] The real reason behind the policy, she argued, was racial prejudice. She pointed out that a thorough analysis of the sources would in fact show that the call to exclude the Chinese and other coloured peoples was more often expressed in 'racial terms' than any other terms.[34] Like Kellaway, Bruce Mansfield believed that the White Australia policy was 'undoubtedly racial in origin and inspiration'.[35] 'Racialism,' he asserted, 'is easily recognized and can be unmistakably observed in racial discussions of the Chinese question.'[36] However, Mansfield believed that racialism was not the only motivating factor. In an argument reminiscent of Willard's 'preservation of British nationality' thesis, Mansfield stressed that Australian nationalism, especially its radical variant, also played a crucial role in the formation of White Australia policy.[37]

Like Willard's pioneering work, the essays of Kellaway and Mansfield were significant to the historiography not just of the White Australia policy but also of the Chinese in Australia. While Kellaway and Mansfield provided no new information that could illuminate the lasting influence of the White Australia policy in contemporary Australian society, their work was important insofar as they articulated what for a long time been persistently denied by students of Australian history—racism. It was a brave move, too, considering the fact that at the time of their essays' publication, the White Australia policy enjoyed strong public support.[38] By the late 1950s, however, Kellaway's and Mansfield's early indictment of the White Australia policy was becoming more and more typical as the movement against racism gathered strong momentum.[39] Popular opinion drifted away from the policy.[40] In academia, the anti-racism movement gained firm purpose with the introduction of race relations studies, a

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[32] Ibid., p. 8.
[33] Ibid., p. 7.
[34] Ibid., p. 8.
[35] Bruce Mansfield, "The Origin of White Australia," The Australian Quarterly, 26/4 (December 1954), p. 62.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid., p. 65.
[38] In 1954, the year Mansfield's article was published and a year after Kellaway's, a public opinion survey showed that 61% of Australians expressed support for the White Australia policy. Markus, "Immigration and Some 'Lessons' of Australian History," p. 17
[39] Meaney, "The End of White Australia," p. 178.
[40] A popular opinion survey in 1959 indicated that 59% of Australians favoured Asian immigration.

new area of study within sociology.[41] By 1960, the anti-racism movement finally took solid form with the organisation of the Immigration Reform Group, a civil society organisation lobbying for a 'colour blind' immigration policy.[42] The group fuelled a great deal of debate that pressured the government to bring about substantial reform of the White Australia policy.[43]

The emergence of the anti-racism movement in Australia was triggered by different domestic and global factors. Neville Meaney, for instance, attributed this to the rise of anti-Nazism in Europe, the anti-colonial movements in Asia and Africa, and to Australia's increasing engagement with Asia.[44] These factors, Meaney believed, were responsible for creating race consciousness and for softening the attitudes of Australians towards non-Europeans. Jennifer Clark, on the other hand, has attributed the intensification of the anti-racism movement to the civil rights movement in the United States and South Africa.[45] The movement, which earned wide popular support from Australians, somehow managed to politicise the issue of race in Australia.[46] As a direct result of the growing public sentiment against racist practices, the government made significant changes to the White Australia Policy. Greater leeway was now given to the immigration of non-Europeans, in particular those who had families living in Australia or those seeking political asylum.[47] Non-Europeans who had lived in Australia for fifteen years were also made eligible to become Australian citizens.[48] In 1958, the government removed the dictation test as a basis for immigration.[49] The most important changes, however, were introduced in 1966 by the Holt government. The first was the total omission of the racial criterion as a basis for citizenship.[50] The second allowed the immigration of non-Europeans as long as they could demonstrate 'their ability to integrate readily' and if they had the skills that were 'positively useful to

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[41] See Frank Lewins, "Race and Ethnic Relations: Sociology and History," in Ann Curthoys and Andrew Markus, editors, Who are Our Enemies? Racism and the Australian Working Class, (Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1978): 10-19.
[42] Jamie Mackie, "The Immigration Reform Movement: Some Recollections," in Nancy Viviani, editor, The Abolition of the White Australia Policy: The Immigration Reform Movement Revisited, (Nathan: Griffith University Centre for the Study of Australia-Asian Relations): 21-31.
[43] Mackie, "The Politics of Asian Immigration," pp. 20-24.
[44] Meaney, "The End of 'White Australia'," pp. 178-181.
[45] Jennifer Clark, "'The Wind of Change' in Australia: Aborigines and the International Politics of Race, 1960-1972," The International History Review, 20/1 (March 1998): 89-117.
[46] In 1961, 59% of Australians disapproved of apartheid. Ibid., p. 94.
[47] Meaney, "The End of 'White Australia'", p. 178.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid., p. 179.

Australia'.[51] By 1973, all references to racial discrimination in the country's immigration policy were formally abolished.[52]

These changes inspired scholars to assess once and for all the legacy of the White Australia policy. Perhaps because of the new intellectual climate, a good number of these scholars took a critical stance against the policy. The study of political scientist A.C. Palfreeman on the government's administration of the policy, and the research of historian A.T. Yarwood on the shifting trends in Asian immigration to White Australia, reflected this new attitude.[53] Palfreeman and Yarwood faulted the government for its inconsistent application of the policy. Its implementation, they observed, often 'varied in generosity and in manner of execution according to a number of local and overseas influences.'[54] This arrangement put the Chinese at a disadvantage. As Yarwood indicated, they suffered severe discrimination compared to other non-European immigrants.[55] The 'local objection to the Chinese as an immigrant race', the opposition of Australian businesses to Chinese merchants, not to mention the fact that the Chinese lacked the support of their home government, all made their immigration to Australia doubly cumbersome and difficult.[56]

David Johanson's historical essay in the Immigration Reform Group's propaganda pamphlet posed the most serious indictment of the White Australia policy since Kellaway and Mansfield.[57] Johanson contradicted Willard's earlier explanation that the White Australia policy was premised on Australian nationalism. The real motivation, he contended, was 'racial as well as economic': through the Australians' sense of racial superiority, the fear of racial contamination, and the unwarranted belief that the presence of non-Europeans would be injurious to Australia's high living standards.[58] Johanson's argumentation was not entirely surprising considering that his main purpose was to strengthen the case of Immigration Reform Group against the White Australia policy. His personal opposition to the policy could be gleaned from his use of strong and emotional words to disparage not only the policy but also its

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[51] Ibid.
[52] Mackie, "Politics of Asian Immigration," p. 19.
[53] A.C. Palfreeman, The Administration of White Australia Policy, (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1967). A.T. Yarwood, Asian Immigration to Australia: The Background to Exclusion, 1896-1923, (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1964).
[54] Yarwood, Asian Immigration to Australia, p. 2. See also Palfreeman, The Administration of White Australia Policy, p. 4.
[55] Yarwood, Asian Immigration to Australia, p. 104.
[56] Ibid., pp. 115-123.
[57] Johanson, "History of the White Australia Policy," pp. 1-27.
[58] Ibid., p. 13.

proponents and supporters. For instance, he characterised anti-Chinese legislation as 'sinister' and a 'devious method of discrimination', and dismissed the movement against Chinese immigration as 'vague, local and occasional [which] hardened into [a] settled policy'.[59] Johanson's essay was by far the most illustrative of the emerging anti-racist thinking in 1960s Australia. It captured both the break in popular Australian attitudes to non-European immigration and the shift from Willard's white nationalist orthodoxy.[60]

From the mid-1960s onwards, scholars began to acknowledge that racism was indeed an integral part of the White Australia policy.[61] It also became commonplace to examine the dynamics of the policy from the specific context of the Chinese community. This should not come as a surprise. After all, the Chinese figured prominently in the White Australia debate. G. Oddie's 1961 study of the Chinese community in late-19th century Victoria ushered in this new research agenda.[62] In particular, Oddie looked into the community's social structure for leads to how the policy came about. The Chinese community in Australia, he emphasised, was composed of two distinct classes—the 'merchant elite' and the 'lower class' Chinese. The former, he insisted, was well-liked and well received by the colonists. They were widely recognised for their contributions to the colonial economy, and were deeply admired for their personal qualities. He inferred that these merchant elites could not possibly be the source of anti-Chinese hostility. In contrast to the merchant elites who were highly westernised, the lower class Chinese 'stuck tenaciously to their beliefs and customs'.[63] Not only did they fail 'to understand the niceties of democratic procedure', they also refused to be converted to Christianity.[64] Their reluctance to assimilate was the main reason why Australians regarded them with derision.[65]

Several scholars endeavoured to locate the precise source of antagonistic feelings towards the Chinese. Historian Rupert Lockwood attributed anti-Chinese

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[59] Ibid., pp. 6-7.
[60] For a discussion of the changing attitudes of Australians to Asian immigration, see Mackie, "The Politics of Asian Immigration," pp. 10-48.
[61] Curthoys, "Racism and Class," p. 95.
[62] G. Oddie, "The Lower Class Chinese and the Merchant Elite in Victoria, 1870-1890," Historical Studies, 10/37 (November 1961): 65-69.
[63] Ibid., p. 65.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid., p. 69.

hostility to 'British imperial influences'.[66] He asserted that prejudices towards the Chinese were part of the 'prevailing Imperial doctrines' which accompanied the colonisation and settlement of the continent.[67] He blamed, in particular, the engineers of imperialism in London as well as their agents in the colonies for breeding contempt for Chinese culture, and for nurturing the idea that Australia was predestined exclusively for the British.[68] Robert Huttenback similarly blamed the British imperial experience for fuelling anti-Chinese prejudice. He contended that the rapid commercial and military expansion of the British Empire in the 18th century nurtured among the British a strong sense of racial uniqueness and a strong feeling of moral superiority. [69] These feelings were immediately transplanted to the colonies where the presence of non-Europeans strengthened the belief in white supremacy. But unlike Lockwood, Huttenback believed that the British government did not in any way fuel racism in the colonies. On the contrary, it almost always opposed all forms of racist policy. It repeatedly admonished colonial governments across the empire about the need to uphold the 'imperial philosophy of equality and fair play' in their treatment of non-Europeans, especially those who were British subjects as well as those who came from the 'friendly powers' such as China and Japan.[70] Unfortunately, this admonition was largely ignored in the face of the backlash in colonial sentiment. Besides, the British Government was unable to interfere directly in colonial affairs because of the distance of the colonies and the relative autonomy of colonial governments.[71]

In her study of 19th century Australian responses to non-European immigration, Verity Burgmann echoed Lockwood's thesis that anti-Chinese racism was indeed

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[66] Rupert Lockwood, "British Imperial Influences in the Foundation of White Australia Policy," Labour History, 7 (May 1964): 23-33.

[67] Ibid., p. 32. .

[68] Christine Bolt has likewise traced the hostile attitude of the British towards other races to Britain's empire building project. But she blamed in particular the missionaries who popularised the derogatory images of the "other" as primitive, savages, immoral, etc., to justify colonisation and consequently, gather support for their evangelising activities. Christine Bolt, "Race and the Victorians," in C.C. Eldridge, editor, British Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984), pp. 127-129.

[69] Robert Huttenback, Racism and Empire: White Settlers and Colored Immigrants in the British Self-Governing Colonies, 1830-1910, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976), pp. 14-16. See also Linda Colley, "Britishness and Otherness: An Argument," The Journal of British Studies, 31/4 (October 1992): 309-329. Linda Colley believed that British imperial expansion encouraged the British to see themselves as different from their subjects in the empire. They saw themselves as special and superior, with their more complex laws, higher standard of living, humane sense of morality, stable government, and above all, their economic, technological and military power, p. 324.

[70] Ibid.

[71] Ibid., pp. 317-318.

inspired by 'British imperialist racism'.[72] Burgmann, however, did not discount the local agency: that these ill-feelings grew as a result of circumstances peculiar to Australia. Australia, she said, was 'founded on racist assumptions, and that with the beginnings of pastoral expansion, this racism developed a dynamic of its own, independently of, but nevertheless encouraged by, British imperialist racism.'[73] She asserted that Australian racist attitudes were rooted in the economic interests of the ruling class.[74] The political and economic elites encouraged racist practices among the workers so as to deflect possible proletarian opposition against capitalist exploitation. They perpetuated racism to ensure a quiescent working class:

> [Racism] self-evidently divides the working class and lessens its resistance to exploitation. Employers benefited directly from white worker antagonism to Chinese workers, as a cheap labour supply could only remain cheap if organisationally distinct from the rest of the labour force. Also, much of white working class energy was wasted attacking coloured workers rather than aiming at a general improvement in living standards for all workers.[75]

Historian Ann Curthoys also believed that racism was deeply rooted in Australian society. She, however, countered Burgmann's suggestion that racism was rooted in the economic interest of the ruling class alone. She reiterated that racist ideas were apparent in the thinking and attitudes not only of the political and economic elites but also of the ordinary working Australians.[76] These ideas, she argued, were developed and harboured by the two groups independently of each other. Both groups advanced racists arguments so as to promote their own economic and political interests.[77] For Curthoys, the real basis of anti-Chinese racism was 'the predominant race theories which had arisen from the colonising experience'.[78] Henry Reynolds identified the

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[72] Verity Burgmann, "Capital and Labour: Responses to Immigration in the Nineteenth Century," in Curthoys and Markus, Who are Our Enemies?, p. 20.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid., p. 21.
[75] Ibid., p. 22.
[76] Ann Curthoys, "Conflict and Consensus: The Seamen's Strike of 1878," in Curthoys and Markus, editors, Who are Our Enemies?, pp. 48-65. Cf. Andrew Markus, "Divided We Fall: The Chinese and the Melbourne Furniture Trade Union, 1870-1900," Labour History, 26 (May 1974): 1-10.
[77] Ibid., p. 56. It was true indeed that the ruling elites encouraged non-European immigration notwithstanding strong opposition from the workers. But this did not mean that they looked favourably on them. They were well aware of their racial superiority, and had always regarded the non-Europeans as inferior. In fact, it was because of this belief in the inferiority of the non-Europeans that they wanted them to come to Australia: the non-Europeans, being inferior, could do the "dirty work" which no white working men wanted. Curthoys, "Racism and Class," p. 99
[78] Ibid., p. 56.

different race theories that circulated in Australia during the first half of 19th century.[79] He showed how these theories advanced the idea of white superiority and the inherent inferiority of coloured peoples.

Raymond Evan's study of race relations in colonial Australia has similarly highlighted the influence of prevailing race theories in inciting inter-racial hostilities.[80] 'Once such theories exist,' Evans wrote, 'they 'take on a life of their own', they escalate racial conflict and, by the intellectual permission they give, they enable racialists to act with greater confidence.'[81] Race theories were immensely popular in colonial Australia. Evans insisted that it was not only the intellectuals who subscribed to these theories; they also gained a strong following among the 'common man'.[82] The race theories that dominated Western thinking in the 19th century apparently made more sense in Australia. The Australian colonists, he said, found it easy to relate these theories to their own 'experiences and attitudes regarding Aborigines, Melanesians, and Chinese whom they either directly encountered or read of, second hand, on an almost daily basis…'[83] Besides, the popular press gave these ideas wide currency.[84] They were publicised extensively, providing readers with 'a wealth of illustrative materials which popularized scientific racist theories and at the same time, provided plenty of local examples to bear these theories out.'[85]

Andrew Markus likewise acknowledged that racist ideas were firmly entrenched in white Australian society since 1788.[86] The early settlers, Markus demonstrated, were unquestionably racist as shown in their encounters with the Aborigines.[87] They saw and treated these Aborigines as a primitive people who failed to develop 'technological advances of civilised man' and who had no conception whatsoever of 'elevating ideals'. Markus, however, insisted that these ideas were applied only to the Aborigines. At least before the 1880s, no racist idea was applied directly to other non-Europeans, especially

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[79] Henry Reynolds, "Racial Thought in Early Colonial Australia," Australian Journal of Politics and History, 20/1 (April 1974): 45-53.
[80] Raymond Evans, in "Keep the White Strain: Race Relations in a Colonial Setting," in Raymond Evans, Kay Saunders, and Kathryn Cronin, Exclusion, Exploitation and Extermination: Race Relations in Colonial Queensland, (Sydney: Australia and New Zealand Book Company, 1975): 1-23.
[81] Ibid., p. 16.
[82] Ibid., p. 15.
[83] Ibid..
[84] Ibid.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Andrew Markus, Fear and Hatred: Purifying Australia and California, 1850-1901, (Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1979).
[87] Ibid., p. 240. See also Andrew Markus, From the Barrel of A Gun: The Oppression of the Aborigines, 1860-1900, (Melbourne: Victoria Historical Association, 1974).

the Chinese.[88] The Chinese, as a matter of fact, 'were seen as a civilised people, although most believed that the civilisation of China had atrophied.'[89] Anti-Chinese opposition, Markus argued, drew its precedents from the anti-transportation movement rather than from prevailing racist beliefs.[90] The Chinese were likened to the convicts. Both were considered civilised like any other white man. They, however, 'failed to live up to the standards of European civilisations and thus could not be admitted to [Australia] without imperilling the task of nation building.'[91] Markus further demonstrated that the main reason why the Chinese were discriminated against was because of their ability to compete with white Australians in a wide range of economic pursuits.[92] They were not considered as racially inferior but as 'undesirable immigrants'.[93] The situation, however, changed in the 1880s. Employers who were seeking to develop the country's north purposely deployed existing racial theories on the non-Europeans in order to justify the importation of cheap coloured labour. The non-Europeans, Markus said, were placed 'outside the definition of humanity' so as to perpetuate their status as indentured workers.[94]

While scholars have yet to agree on how anti-Chinese feelings emerged, they have generally conceded that the Chinese in Australia were indeed harshly treated. Charles Price's *The Great White Walls are Built* gauged the severity of state-backed persecution of the Chinese in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States.[95] The 'most conspicuous features' of the treatment towards the Chinese immigrants in these countries, he maintained, 'are prejudiced attitudes and discriminatory behaviour [which often led] to open clashes and sometimes genocide or wholesale expulsion.'[96] According to Price, the purpose of his study was to 'show that some countries are more "racist" than others and that international bodies such as the United Nations...should exert all the pressure they can to force such countries into more enlightened policies.'[97] Kathryn Cronin's *Colonial Casualties: Chinese in Early Victoria* chronicled the sad

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[88] Markus, Fear and Hatred, p. 236. See also Andrew Markus, "Explaining the Treatment of Non-European Immigrants in Nineteenth Century Australia," Labour History, 49 (November 1985): 86-91
[89] Ibid., p. 240.
[90] Ibid., p. 238.
[91] Ibid., p. 239.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Ibid., p. 240.
[94] Ibid., p. 244.
[95] Charles Price, The Great White Walls are Built: Restrictive Immigration to North America and Australasia, 1836-1888, (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1974).
[96] Ibid., p. vii.
[97] Ibid., pp. ix-x.

plight of the Chinese within the hostile Victorian society.[98] Cronin portrayed the Chinese as victims of the xenophobic colonial order, and accused the Australian workers, miners, academics, journalists, and politicians of bigotry and vicious behaviour.

New Directions, 1980s-1990s

The 'Chinese-as-victims' narrative dominated Australian historical writings throughout the late 1960s and the 1970s. Nevertheless, a small minority of historians managed to venture outside the convention. Arthur Huck, for example, examined the characteristics of the post-war Chinese Australian communities.[99] Huck looked into their population, occupation, living conditions, immigration and settlement patterns, assimilability into mainstream Australian society, and political allegiances, as well as the contemporary white Australian attitudes. C.Y. Choi conducted a follow up of Huck's study, with a much longer time frame.[100] Choi provided an overview of the migrant-sending communities in Southern China, and then considered the Chinese migration and settlement from 1861 until the mid-1960s. Cathie May, meanwhile, focused her study on the history of the Chinese in Far North Queensland.[101] She examined the 'push and pull' factors that brought the Chinese to Australia, their socio-economic activities in Australia, and the roots of Chinese-Australian hostility.

In the late 1970s, a number of scholars started to raise serious doubts about the ways the Chinese were being stereotypically portrayed in Australian history. C.F. Yong, for one, challenged the existing scholarship which denied the Chinese historical agency.[102] In his *The New Gold Mountain: The Chinese in Australia, 1901-1921*, Yong showed that the Chinese were not passive bystanders in Australian society. On the contrary, they participated actively in Australian politics, notwithstanding the marginalisation and discrimination. They vigorously resisted as one community all forms of discriminatory legislations and actions.[103] Yong also showed that the Chinese

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[98] Cronin, Colonial Casualties.
[99] Arthur Huck, The Chinese in Australia, (Croydon: Longmans of Australia, 1968).
[100] C.Y. Choi, Chinese Migration and Settlement in Australia, (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1975).
[101] Cathie May, "The Chinese Community in Far North Queensland," in Lectures on North Queensland History, (Townsville: History Department, James Cook University, 1974), pp. 121-138.
[102] C.F. Yong, The New Gold Mountain: The Chinese in Australia, 1901-1921, (Richmond: Raphael Arts, 1977).
[103] Ibid., pp. 222-223.

were not inert and unchanging as they were often perceived to be. They had willingly accommodated or adopted the Australian way of life.[104]

May, on the other hand, disproved the notion that the relations between the Chinese and their Australian hosts were characteristically discordant.[105] She showed that, in Cairns, relations between the two were in fact amicable. The Chinese were cordially received by the mainstream Australian community in view of their usefulness to the economy.[106] Like May, Markus questioned the portrayal of the Chinese as victims of 'unmerciful brutality, of repeated acts of violence'. If this was indeed true, Markus asked, why did the Chinese desire to remain and live amongst Australians?[107] He acknowledged that while the Chinese were subjected to repeated acts of violence, 'their rights under [colonial Australian] law, which were not insignificant, were also protected, although not in all instances.'[108] Chinese diaspora specialist Jennifer Cushman raised her concern for what she observed as the repeated failure of scholars to understand the Chinese on their own terms. She censured such scholars for ignoring the ways 'the Chinese situated themselves within the Australian social and political order, the extent to which their values and customs clashed with those of Australians, and the kinds of judgements they made so that they could fit more comfortably into what was to become a hostile environment.'[109]

Other scholars completely veered away from the conventional paradigms of race and racism. J.M's Graham's 1984 study of the role of colonial press in inciting hatred towards the Chinese exemplified this paradigm shift. [110] Graham demonstrated that the hostilities between Australians and Chinese were precipitated largely by public opinion makers, rather than by inherent racist beliefs among colonial Australians. Anti-Chinese feelings, he argued, were

> made articulate by some, at least, of the colonial press, through editorials which helped provide the demagogues at anti-Chinese rallies with the attitudes and

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[104] Ibid., p. 225.
[105] Cathie May, "European-Chinese Relations in the Cairns District," in Henry Reynolds, editor, Race Relation in North Queensland, (Townsville: James Cook University, 1978), pp. 255-275. See also Cathie May, Topsawyers: The Chinese in Cairns, 1870-1920, (Townsville: History Department James Cook University, 1978).
[106] Ibid., p. 267.
[107] Andrew Markus, "The Chinese in Australian History," pp. 91.
[108] Ibid.
[109] Cushman, "The Chinese Community in Australian Historiography," p. 101.
[110] J.M. Graham, "'A Danger That No Language Could Magnify': The *Newcastle Morning Herald* and the Chinese Question," Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society, 69/4 (March 1984): 239-250.

> expressions that set their listeners alight, and trade unionists with fears that were institutionalised into inter-colonial policies on non-white immigration.[111]

David Walker echoed the same arguments in his study of popular literature depicting an impending 'Asian invasion'.[112] According to Walker, these alarmist accounts sowed unwarranted fear among readers that Australia would one day become 'miscegenated, mixed race community, dominated by wealthy Chinese and the British imperialists who supported them'.[113] The fear of being outnumbered in their own country, Walker contended, drove ordinary Australians to make a hasty stand against the Chinese.

The role of the written word in galvanising anti-Chinese attitudes was also highlighted in Marilyn Lake's study of the influence of popular 19th century 'historical writings on race' on the project of White Australia.[114] Lake looked at the widely read work of Oxford race historian Charles Pearson who forecast in 1893 the imminent decline of the white race and the rise of the so-called 'Black and Yellow races'. The white race, Pearson believed, had become stationary as a result of low birth rates and rising State socialism in western countries, while the 'Black and Yellow races' were gaining world ascendancy as a result of their growing population and enhanced technological capacity.[115] These writings, particularly their dire forecasts of the 'expansion and dynamism of the "Black and Yellow" races', created the foreboding impression in Australia of the 'white man under siege'. Being ominously situated in the 'Black and Yellow belt', it was predicted that Australia would inevitably be swamped by 'coloured races'. The impact of these writings on the decision of Australian policymakers to restrict Chinese immigration had been profound. They reinforced the

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[111] Ibid., p. 239. For a similar discussion of the role of colonial presses in the manufacture of public opinion, see Elisabeth Morrison, "Black Wednesday and the 'Manufacture of Public Opinion," in Ann Curthoys and Julianne Schultz, editors, Journalism: Print, Politics and Popular Culture, (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1999), pp. 36-55.

[112] David Walker, Anxious Nation: Australia and the Rise of Asia, 1850-1939, (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1999), pp. 98-112. See also David Walker, "Race Building and the Disciplining of White Australia," in Laksiri Jayasuriya, David Walker and Jan Gothard, editors, Legacies of White Australia: Race, Culture and Nation, (Crawley: University of Western Australia Press, 2003), pp. 33-50, Neville Meaney, "'The Yellow Peril': Invasion Scare Novels and Australian Political Culture," in Ken Stewart, editor, The 1890s: Australian Literature and Literary Culture, (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1996), pp. 228-263, and Ouyang Yu, "Australian Invention of Chinese Invasion: A Century of Paranoia, 1888-1988," Australian Literary Studies, 17/1 (May 1995), pp. 74-83.

[113] Walker, "Race Building and the Disciplining of White Australia," p. 35.

[114] Marilyn Lake, "The White Man Under Siege: New Histories of Race in the Nineteenth Century and the Advent of White Australia," History Workshop Journal, 58/1 (Autumn 2004), pp. 42-62.

[115] Ibid., p. 42.

belief that the racial integrity of the continent and its white settlers must be protected by keeping the '"Black and Yellow" races at bay'.[116]

Some scholars identified the role of emergent Australian nationalism in the formation of the White Australia policy. Helen Irving, for one, argued that the White Australia policy was nationalist inasmuch as it was racist. The policy was 'unequivocally a racist issue,' she said, 'but it was much more than this. As much as anything, it was a type of cultural strategy in the process of nation building.'[117] According to Irving, the call to exclude the Chinese from Australia was predicated not only on the idea that the Chinese were racially inferior but also on the belief that Australia was going to be a white nation.[118] This belief grew out of expanding Australian nationalism, and gained wide acceptance in the 1880s, when talk of a federal union intensified. The Chinese were, of course, excluded from this national vision. As Irving observed, there was a general consensus among politicians across the political spectrum that 'the creation of the nation meant controlling the level of the 'coloured" population in Australia.'[119] Long before federation, laws that would 'standardise the membership' of this projected white nation were enacted, including a whole range of restrictions against Chinese and other non-European immigration.[120] For many Australians, the White Australia policy was seen as a safeguard that would ensure that 'the new nation was to have a "purified" beginning, freed from the threat of pollution and disorder that, in both popular and political imagination, came from coloured people in numbers.'[121]

Historian David Day pursued the economics of anti-Chinese attitudes in his 'new history of Australia.'[122] Day did not simply echo the earlier charges of unfair economic competition and threat to Australia's living standards against the Chinese. More importantly, he traced how these charges came about in the first place. He posited that the origin of anti-Chinese sentiments could actually be traced back to the importation of Chinese coolies by Australian squatters in the late 1840s. The Chinese coolies, he said, arrived during a period of economic uncertainty. [123] The drought, the

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[116] Ibid., p. 59.
[117] Helen Irving, To Constitute a Nation: A Cultural History of Australia's Constitution, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999 updated edition), p. 100.
[118] Ibid.
[119] Ibid.
[120] Ibid., 107.
[121] Ibid., p. 118.
[122] David Day, Claiming a Continent: A New History of Australia, (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1996).
[123] Ibid., pp. 134-135.

drop in the price of wool and the abolition of transportation resulted in a depression, labour shortage, and a serious fiscal crisis in the colonies. For ordinary working class Australians, these difficult times were compounded by the squatters' decision to import cheap Chinese labour. The ill timing of their arrival, plus the fact that they were used to displace white labour, embedded 'in the memory of the labour movement the spectre of non-European labour constituting a threat to living standards.'[124]

Other scholars were not convinced by these mono-causal explanations. Graeme Davison, for one, argued that Australian hostility against the Chinese is a result of a complicated series of events. [125] Hence, a singular explanation is on the whole insufficient to explain fully the harsh treatment of the Chinese. He suggested that a deeper understanding of the anti-Chinese attitudes should take into account the Australians' 'framework of assumptions' and ideologies, and the fact that popular and individual opinions on the Chinese could be 'modified by the [press], the opinions of "experts" and acquaintances, as well as an individual's personal experiences of [Chinese] immigrants.'[126] Like Davison, Curthoys similarly emphasised the need for analysing the long history of Chinese-Australian conflict in 'several broader contexts'.[127] She reiterated that the Chinese antipathy was informed not only by the prevailing theories of race but also by various socio-economic, political, historical, cultural, psychological and ideological factors.[128] A thorough understanding of these closely related factors is essential in gaining a broader knowledge of the complicated nature of cross-cultural and cross-racial interactions in Australia. Curthoys heeded her own suggestion by charting the hitherto unexplored terrains of colonial Australia's characteristically discordant race relations history. In her essay titled "Liberalism and Exclusionism", for example, she explored how a liberal political ideology legitimised racist impulses among Australians. In another essay, she probed into the largely unstudied psychological foundation of Australian racial prejudices. She discovered that

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[124] Ibid., p. 135.
[125] Graeme Davision, "Unemployment, Race, and Public Opinion: Reflections on the Asian Immigration Controversy of 1888," in Markus and Ricklefs, editors, Surrender Australia, p. 103.
[126] Ibid., pp. 110-111.
[127] Curthoys, "Racism and Class," p. 95.
[128] See Curthoys, "Raqcism and Class,"; "Expulsion, Exodus, Exile in White Australian Historical Mythology," Journal of Australian Studies, 61 (1999), pp. 1-18; "'Men of All Nations, Except Chinamen': Europeans and Chinese on the Goldfields of New South Wales," in Iain McCalman, Alexander Cook and Andrew Reeves, editors, Gold: Forgotten Histories and Lost Objects of Australia, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 103-123; and "Liberalism and Exclusionism: A Prehistory of the White Australia Policy," in Laksiri Jayasuriya, David Walker and Jan Gothard, editors, Legacies of White Australia: Race, Culture and Nation, (Crawley: University of Western Australia Press, 2003), pp. 8-32.

racial prejudices were actually a manifestation of fear among Australians—fear 'of being cast out, exiled, expelled, made homeless again, after two centuries of securing a new home far away from home.'[129]

Phil Griffiths identified a range of other reasons.[130] One fundamental reason, according to Griffith, was strategic. The Australian colonists believed that the presence of a large Chinese population could hamper Australia's security, should a resurgent Chinese empire decide to invade or colonise the continent. Another reason was the problem of social control. The colonists believed that unrestricted Chinese immigration could 'involve the risk of weakening, or even loss of British/Australian control' of the colonies since the Chinese persistently refused to submit to British principles of liberalism and democracy. The Chinese were seen different. They had their own means of social control which was totally alien, and oftentimes contradicted the British system. The final concern was rooted in the fear that the Chinese presence would produce a racially-divided economy. The ruling elites, in particular, feared that a 'large percentage of coloured people' would create economic problems such as those experienced by the United States which found itself 'plunged into civil war by the irreconcilable divisions between a modern industrial sector based in the north, and the southern slave states.'

The rise and fall of multiculturalism in Australian public discourse in the 1990s sparked a great deal of discussion about Australian national identity. [131] This should not come as a surprise. After all, as Ang has suggested, multiculturalism in Australia could be seen 'as a form of symbolic politics aimed at redefining national identity.'[132] While much of the discussion was concerned mainly with questions about the true constitution of Australian identity, several scholars looked further by asking how the Chinese Australians figured in the forging of this identity. Jane Lydon explored this question in her archaeological study of a 19th century Chinese ghetto in Rocks, Sydney. Her work uncovered the many creative ways by which the Chinese and the mainstream Australian community reached out to one other.[133] In this process of 'complex cultural

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[129] Curthoys, "Expulsion, Exodus, Exile," pp. 3 and 17.

[130] Phil Griffiths, "The Road to White Australia: Economics, Politics and Social Control in the Anti-Chinese Laws of 1877-1888," in http://members.optusnet.com.au/~griff52/racism.html. (Accessed on 10 August 2006).

[131] Ang, On Not Speaking Chinese, pp. 95-98. See also Ann Curthoys, "History and Identity," in Wayne Hudson and Geoffrey Bolton, editor, Creating Australia: Changing Australian History, (St. Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 1997), pp. 23-37.

[132] Ibid., p. 95.

[133] Jane Lydon, Many Inventions: The Chinese in the Rocks, 1890-1930, (Clayton: Monash Publications in History, 1999).

interaction', Lydon noted that it was not only the Chinese who were affected. The Australians, too, underwent radical transformation as a result of the convergence with Chinese structures. In short, both the Chinese and the Australians helped shape each other's identity.[134]

In her essay "Chineseness and Australian Identity", Curthoys emphasised that the Chinese Australians, like the Anglo-Celtic Australians, were not monolithic entities. They have 'multiple loyalties, collective memories, senses of belonging, and intricacies in identity'.[135] Jan Ryan reiterated the same point.[136] She argued that 'there is no cohesive "Chineseness" organising the heterogeneous identities of peoples of Chinese descent in Australia.'[137] The Chinese, she said, 'came from different cultural backgrounds, and faced very different conditions and circumstances [in Australia] to which they responded in very different ways.'[138] Historians need 'to go beyond Orientalist contrasts between us and them, Australian and Chinese, and to engage in a re-examination of sites of difference and dialogue.'[139] Shen Yuan-fang confirmed that the Chinese indeed have complex identities which the commonly depicted stereotypes have, unfortunately, overly simplified and essentialised.[140] Through a close reading of the personal memoirs of two Chinese immigrants, she discovered that, despite their experience of racism, the Chinese immigrants readily identified themselves as "pioneers, [the] equals of (rather than superior or inferior to) their European counterparts."[141] Not only did they fail to empathise with the Aboriginal Australians as fellow victims of racism, they also looked down on them with the same racist attitudes to which the white colonists had been subjecting them.[142] Her discovery showed that the

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[134] Ibid., p. 174. See also Adam McKeown, "The Continuing Reformulation of Chinese Australians," in Sophie Couchman, John Fitzgerald, and Paul Macgregor, editors, After the Rush, Regulation, Participation and Chinese Communities in Australia, 1860-1940, (Kingsbury: Otherland Literary Journal, 2004), pp. 1-10.

[135] Curthoys, "Chineseness and Australian Identity," p. 21.

[136] Jan Ryan, "Chinese Australian History," pp. 71-78.

[137] Ibid., p. 77.

[138] Ibid., p. 72.

[139] Ibid., p. 77.

[140] Shen Yuan-Fang, Dragon Seed in the Antipodes: Chinese Australian Self-Representations, (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2001). See also Shen Yuan-fang, "Pioneers or Sojourners: Self-Representation of Chinese Immigrants," Journal of Australian Studies, 61 (1999), pp. 47-54.

[141] Shen, "Pioneers or Sojourners," p. 47.

[142] Ibid., 49-50. Ann Curthoys has earlier suggested the need to interrogate the relationship between the Aboriginal Australians and the non-Anglo-Celtic immigrants. She hinted that the "histories of the relationship between Indigenous and non-Anglo-Celtic peoples help us see that immigrants are potentially colonizers or subalterns. Which of these potentialities is realized at any historical moment depends on prevailing racial discourse, government policies, the practices of governing agencies, economic

Chinese were not always the victims; they sometimes acted as willing accomplices in the process of colonisation and indigenous dispossession.[143]

In his work on the Australian Kuomintang Party (KMT, Chinese Nationalist Party), John Fitzgerald has similarly discovered that political loyalties of the turn-of-the-century Chinese Australians were undeniably identified with that of the Australians, rather than that of the Chinese in Mainland China.[144] He revealed that, notwithstanding the close ethnic affinity and ideological ties with its parent organisation in China, the Australian KMT remained distinctly Australian, with its members putting strong 'emphasis on labour politics, strong consciousness of Australian revolutionary heritage, and respect for the British rule of law.'[145] Fitzgerald concluded that the 'self-consciously Australian temperament of [the Australian KMT members] throws into high relief the place of Chinese in Australian history, and suggests that the question of what it meant to be Australian in the era of White Australia was all along a contested one.'[146]

Revisionist Histories

But the most forceful criticisms of the prevailing historiographical trend came from conservative elements in Australian society. These criticisms surfaced in the early and late 1980s and again, in the mid-1990s, when the huge influx of Indochinese refugees and Chinese immigrants created a downturn in popular opinion towards Asian immigration in general.[147] The first of these criticisms were raised in 1985 by historian Geoffrey Blainey who, incidentally, had just figured in an earlier controversy with his strong views against Asian immigration [148] This time, however, his main concern was with the way Australian history was being written. He lambasted his fellow historians for their bleak portrayal of Australia's past. He alleged that historians saw

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opportunities and much else." Ann Curthoys, "Immigration and Colonisation: New Histories," UTS Review: Cultural Studies and New Writing, 7/1 (May 2001), p. 172.

[143] See Ann Curthoys, "An Uneasy Conversation: The Multicultural and the Indigenous," in John Docker and Gerhad Fischer, editors, Race, Colour and Identity in Australia and New Zealand, (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2000), pp. 21-36.

[144] John Fitzgerald, "Transnational Networks and National Identities in the Australian Commonwealth," Australian Historical Studies, 127 (2006), pp. 95-116. See also John Fitzgerald, "Advance Australia Fair: Chinese Voices at Federation," in Couchman, Fitzgerald, and Macgregor, editors, After the Rush, pp. 59-74.

[145] Ibid., p. 96.

[146] Ibid.

[147] Mackie, "Politics of Asian Immigration," pp. 24-40. See also M.C. Ricklefs, "The Asian Immigration Controversies of 1984-85, 1988-89 and 1996-97: A Historical Overview," in Geoffrey Gray and Christine Winter, editors, The Resurgence of Racism: Howard, Hanson and the Race Debate, (Clayton: Monash Publications in History, 1997): 39-61.

[148] See for example, Markus and Ricklefs, ed., Surrender Australia.

> Australia's history as largely the story of violence, exploitation, repression, racism, sexism, capitalism, colonialism and a few other 'isms'. Some of their books on Australian history [appeared] now in thundering prose, delivered from a moral height.[149]

He urged them to 'draw up a balance sheet of [Australia's] history' instead, and to admit that the country's achievements in the last 200 years stood out 'as one of the world's success stories'. [150] While Blainey's criticisms did not specifically single out the existing studies on the Chinese, his personal stand against Asian immigration revealed where his polemic was ultimately leading.[151] As Markus and M.C. Ricklefs perceptively observed, there was a strong link between Blainey's opposition to the increasing numbers of Asian immigrants to Australia and his view of Australian history in general and of the Chinese in particular.[152] In Blainey's histories, Markus and Ricklefs pointed out, the 'pioneers, explorers and entrepreneurs who opened Australia to white settlement and contributed so much to its development over the last two centuries' were lauded, while the Chinese were denigrated as 'outsiders, the source of domestic wonderment and conflict.'[153]

Like Blainey, former politician Pauline Hanson expressed her outrage over the vilification of 'mainstream Australians' (i.e., Anglo-Celtic Australians) and the denigration of Australian culture by proponents of 'political correctness', Aboriginal rights, and multiculturalism in the government, the media, and the academia.[154] She accused these people of peddling the wrong notion that 'there is no Australian culture, that mainstream Australians are basically "yobbos", and that the only good things are those which are imported.'[155] She also denounced what she referred to as 'reverse racism' that was being applied by the 'multicultural and Aboriginal industry' to white Australians.[156] They were being discriminated against in their own country, she said.

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[149] Geoffrey Blainey, "They View of Australia's History as a Saga of Shame (Annual Community Lecture Sponsored By Mt. Eliza Uniting Church, 4 October 1985)," in Speeches and Essays of Geoffrey Blainey, (Melbourne: Schwartz and Wilkinson, 1991), p. 50.
[150] Geoffrey Blainey, "Drawing Up a Balance Sheet of Our History," Quadrant, 37/7-8 (July-August 1993), p. 11.
[151] See Geoffrey Blainey, All For Australia, (North Ryde: Methuen Haynes, 1984).
[152] Andrew Markus and M.C. Ricklefs, "Introduction," in Markus and Ricklefs, ed., Surrender Australia, p. 7.
[153] Ibid.
[154] Pauline Hanson, "Maiden Speech [to the House of Representative], September 10, 1996" in George Merritt, editor, Pauline Hanson: The Truth, (Parkholme: St. George Publications, 1997), pp. 2-3.
[155] Pauline Hanson, "Speech at Australian Reform Party (Vic.), Melbourne, Saturday, October 12, 1996," in Merritt, editor, Pauline Hanson: The Truth, p. 15.
[156] Hanson, "Maiden Speech," p. 2.

They were being treated unjustly and unequally, in favour of the 'disadvantaged' groups like the Aboriginals and the Asian immigrants. She questioned the government's practice of extending special privileges to these groups but denying the same to the 'millions of Australians' who were equally disadvantaged. 'I do not believe,' Hanson declared, 'that the colour of one's skin determines whether you are disadvantaged.'[157] She called on the government to redress the inequalities by changing its policy towards the Aboriginals, by abolishing the policy of multiculturalism, and by restricting Asian immigration.

Keith Windschuttle's revisionist histories questioned the veracity of what Australian historians have long considered as historical truths.[158] He accused the historians of deliberately manipulating, misrepresenting, and at times, even fabricating historical evidence in order to produce the versions of history that support their respective political agendas. In his highly controversial *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History*, for example, Windschuttle denounced historians for allegedly twisting historical facts so as to substantiate their story of Aboriginal dispossession. There was no such dispossession that took place, he argued. Australia was in fact the 'site where the least indigenous blood of all was deliberately shed'.[159] Windschuttle made the same allegations against historians who advocated the view that the White Australia policy was a racist policy. Such an argument, he said, has no historical basis. It was but a myth, a 'travesty of [Australia's] past, a caricature of recent events' made by academic historians.[160] He charged that these historians have completely misunderstood the course of events and have seriously misrepresented the true intention of the historical actors involved. A 'proper reading' of the history of the White Australia policy would truthfully reveal that 'there is no ghost of racism haunting mainstream Australian culture'.[161] He stressed that while racist arguments were indeed propounded by a tiny minority in the Federal Parliament, they did not gain significant following and influence

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[157] Ibid.

[158] See Keith Windschuttle, The Killing of History: How a Discipline is Being Murdered by Literary Critics and Social Theorists, (Paddington: Macleay Press, 1994), pp. 69-119; Keith Windschuttle, The Fabrication of Aboriginal History, (Paddington, NSW: Macleay Press, 2002); Keith Windschuttle, The White Australia Policy, (Paddington: Macleay Press, 2004) and Keith Windschuttle "Why Australia is Not a Racist Country," Quadrant, 50/3 (November 2005): 28-35.

[159] Windschuttle, The Fabrication of Aboriginal History, p. 5.

[160] Keith Windschuttle, "The White Australia Policy," The Sydney Papers, 17/3-4 (Winter-Spring 2005), p. 129.

[161] Ibid., p. 134.

during the debate on the 1901 Immigration Restriction Bill.[162] On the contrary, racist arguments were politically unpopular, and were adhered to by a small faction only, such as 'some (but by no means all) trade union activists, Labor politicians and socialist intellectuals'.[163] According to Windschuttle, the Immigration Restriction Bill was passed into law because of the apprehension of Australian politicians that the growing Chinese presence would eventually lead to the 'emergence of an impoverished underclass that might destabilise [Australia's] democratic egalitarianism'.[164]

Like Windschuttle, Matthew Jordan raised his objections to the way historians wrote the history of Australian racism. In a historiographical essay published in 2005, Jordan assailed the historians for their 'failure to appreciate the way in which Australia's changing circumstances throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries produced equally significant changes in its political, social, and cultural attitudes towards race.'[165] He alleged that historians often succumbed to essentialist interpretation by wrongly assuming that racism formed 'the bedrock of colonial society'.[166] A clear notion of race and blood among colonial Australians, he claimed, did not come into circulation until the late 19th century. But, even at this time, it had 'to compete with and [was] for the most part subordinate to the notions of civic liberalism.'[167] He thus urged his fellow historians to rethink and correct the conventional wisdom. He enjoined them to place the study of White Australia 'more fully within the context of the times which gave it birth.'[168]

Scholars received these criticisms with mixed reactions. Burgmann dismissed them as an attempt to 'write racism out of history', while Stuart Macintyre and Anna Clark alluded to the earlier debate on Holocaust denialism and condemned the critics as 'deniers set about re-writing Australian history'.[169] Evans, on the other hand, decried the

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[162] Windschuttle, "Why Australia is not a Racist Country," p. 29.
[163] Ibid.
[164] Ibid.
[165] Matthew Jordan, "Rewriting Australia's Racist Past: How Historians (Mis)Interpret the 'White Australia' Policy," History Compass, 3/1 (January 2005): 1-32.
[166] Ibid., p. 7.
[167] Ibid.
[168] Ibid., p. 27.
[169] Verity Burgmann, "Writing Racism Out of History," Arena, 67 (1984): 78-92 and Stuart Macintyre and Anna Clark, The History Wars, (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2003), p. 148. See also Stuart Macintyre, "History, Politics and the Philosophy of History," Australian Historical Studies, 35/123 (April 2004): 130-136. For a discussion of Windchuttle's views and their similarities to Holocaust denialism, see Ann Curthoys and John Docker, Is History Fiction? (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2006. pp. 229-232.

suggestion Australian race relations had generally been cordial and cooperative.[170] 'If pushed to choose a rough percentage for clear examples of conciliation in the overall pattern of colonial race relations,' he said, 'I would consider it a generous gesture to place this proportion at much above ten percent.' He believed that, on the whole, Australian race relations were 'fraught with conflict, exclusion, exploitation and extermination'.

Cultural theorist Ien Ang probed deeper into these criticisms. She traced the anxious call for a positive understanding of Australian history to the nagging political and ideological needs of the present generation, particularly, the need to instil national pride, and the even more fundamental need to overcome guilt and shame over the unfortunate events of the past.[171] Curthoys, for her part, believed that the desire to gloss over the racist elements in Australian history could be traced to 'some deeply held beliefs about White Australian historical experience'.[172] She noted that Australians do not wish to be told about their racist past because they cannot see themselves as the 'beneficiaries of the colonisation process'.[173] On the contrary, they 'see themselves as victims, not oppressors...[they] see themselves as victims of large economic forces, middle class elites, and powerful nations overseas.'[174]

Conclusion

One of the recurring themes that may be readily gleaned from this brief survey of historical writings on the Chinese in Australia is that of racism. These writings have nearly always emphasised the racist Australian responses to Chinese immigration. While racism has indeed figured prominently in Australian attitudes, there are other equally reasonable explanations worth noting. The diversity of the debate and disagreement between scholars, for one, points to the fact that the Chinese Australian experience has been too complex for it to be easily confined to a singular narrative and analysis. To do so would not only limit one's point of view but also do grave injustice

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[170] Raymond Evans, Fighting Words: Writing About Race, (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1999), p. 21.
[171] Ien Ang, On Not Speaking Chinese: Living between Asia and the West, (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 86-111. See also Desmond Manderson, Guilt, Shame and Reconciliation, Quadrant, 41/7-8 (July-August 1997): 96-99.
[172] Ann Curthoys, "Expulsion, Exodus, and Exile in White Australian History," Journal of Australian Studies, 61 (1999): 2. See also Ann Curthoys, "Entangled Histories: Conflict and Ambivalence in Non-Aboriginal Australia," in Gray and Winter, editors, The Resurgence of Racism, pp. 117-127.
[173] Ibid.
[174] Ibid.

to the intentions of both the Chinese and the Australian subjects. The next chapter will address specifically the limitations of racism as an analytical tool, and offer an alternative interpretation to the Australian opposition against the Chinese.

Chapter 2
Towards an Alternative Interpretation

Existing historical literature has not yet adequately explained the hostile Australian reaction to Chinese immigration. This chapter argues that the racist framework which scholars have been using to interpret anti-Chinese practices is on the whole too simplistic to take into account the complex nature of 19th century colonial Australian life and worldview. It suggests that the angry calls to keep the Chinese out of Australia should be understood not just in terms of racism, but also in terms of what Edward Said identified as discourse of Orientalism.[1]

Interrogating Racism

The practice of categorising human population into distinct 'races' has a rather long history. Ann Stoler actually traced the origin of the idea of race to the early history f Europe, particularly, to the history of 'internal conquests and invasions within the borders of the Europe itself'.[2] Stoler argued that Europe's first ruling classes invented the notion of race to justify the deep social divisions that resulted from these conquests and invasions, as well as to legitimise their power and authority.[3] The European ruling classes, she said, advanced the idea of race to explain the new order where social differences between populations became more and more pronounced than before. They created the artificial distinction between the so-called upper and lower races to affirm their dominant position as rulers on the one hand, and the subjugated position of their subordinates on the other.

During the 16th century, the belief in racial differences between humans was reinforced by the discovery of the New World. The European encounter with unfamiliar peoples in unfamiliar lands created the impression that mankind was indeed created differently. It proved at once that the world was 'populated with a bewildering variety of peoples and cultures; a far more complex world than that explained by the Bible, and

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[1] Said, Orientalism.
[2] Ann Stoler, Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault and the History of Sexuality, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), p. 60.
[3] Ibid., p. 66.

traditional [Judeo-Christian] religious beliefs.'[4] Scholars offered different explanations so as to make sense of this perplexing encounter.[5]

During the Industrial Revolution, Europeans used the idea of race not only to explain human differences, but also to assert their supremacy as a people over the non-Europeans. The shift in the European understanding of race, according to historian Linda Colley, came as a result of the growing sense of national pride among Europeans following the successful territorial and economic expansion overseas.[6] In Britain, the flourishing imperial venture in Asia and Africa encouraged the British to see themselves as 'a distinct, special and—often—superior people.'[7] The British regarded their achievements in laws, standard of living, political stability and above all, their technological and military might as a proof of their supremacy as a people.[8] In much of the Western world, the unquestioning belief in the inherent superiority of European culture immediately took its grip on the contemporary idea of race. One such idea, for example, countered the earlier monogenist view that all men were created equal; that regardless of race, all men were capable of progress.[9] It was now believed that only the Europeans were capable of progress. Another proposed a ranking of human societies into several stages of development commencing from the most primitive to the most civilised.[10] European civilisation was regarded as the fulfilment of all human civilisations while the non-Europeans—who were earlier

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[4] Keith McConnochie, David Hollinsworth and Jan Pettmnan, Race and Racism in Australia, (Wentworth Falls, NSW: Social Science Press, 1988), p. 9.

[5] The Spanish Jesuit, Jose de Acosta, for example, formulated a system of classifying the 'barbarian' subjects of the Spanish Empire according to 'three levels of communication, and hence of civilisation': 'The topmost category was occupied by those who possessed civil society, writing and letters such as the Chinese (whose books Acosta had seen in Mexico) and perhaps also the Japanese and some other Asians. The second level included those who had civil society but lacked formal writing; these included the Mexicas and the Incas. The last level was composed of those who appeared to have no civil society and no written method of communication; into this class fell most of the indigenous tribes of the Americas. Henry Kamen, Empire: How Spain Became a World Power, 1492-1763, (New York: Harper Collins, 2003), p. 275. The acclaimed father of taxonomy, Linnaeus, also formulated his own system of classification in 1751. Linnaeus proposed that humanity could be classified as belonging to one of the following racial grouping: namely, the Europeans, American Indians, Asiatics, and Africans. McConnochie, Hollinsworth and Pettmnan, Race and Racism in Australia, p. 10.

[6] Linda Colley, "Britishness and Otherness: An Argument," The Journal of British Studies, 31/4 (October 1992), pp. 309-329.

[7] Ibid., p. 324.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Bolt, "Race and the Victorians," p. 129.

[10] McConnochie, Hollinsworth and Pettmnan, Race and Racism in Australia,, p. 9.

romanticised as 'rational but antithetical indictment of civilisation'—were henceforth portrayed as 'enslaved to passion...cruel, slothful features of the natural world.'[11]

The influence of these new ideas of race to the thinking and attitudes of Europeans was profound. They even shaped the historical literatures of the period. The writings of Leopold von Ranke, the acknowledged founder of scientific history, showed how these racial ideas permeated the general intellectual mood of the times. Ranke did not only give race a central role in history, he also dictated which among his racial categorisations should and should not be considered as part of history.[12] He argued that only the 'superior peoples' from the Germanic or Latin-Germanic backgrounds are genuinely part of history.[13] Swiss art historian Jacob Burckhardt had the same racially deterministic view of history. Ann Curthoys and John Docker explained that

> Burckhardt perceives the course of world history in terms of hierarchy of the civilised, the semi-civilised, and the uncivilised or uncivilisable. In discussing world history, we should focus, says Burckhardt, only on 'the active races' for our 'pictures of civilization'. We should only focus on peoples with a developed historical consciousness; in this sense, we must rule out...'barbarians because they have no history'. Nothing can be learnt about political organisation or religion, for instance, from 'negroes and Red Indians'; nothing from 'lesser races', the 'savages and semi-savages', 'primitive peoples' whose religions arise simply out of fear.[14]

So strong was Burckhardt's disgust for the barbaric races that he even suggested that they should be completely eliminated in the same way as the Red Indians were made to die out in America. He invoked the 'royal right of civilization to conquer and subdue barbarism, which must then abandon its bloody, internecine warfare and abhorrent customs and bow to the moral principles of the civilised State.'[15]

By the middle of the 19th century, science took over much of the European ideas of race. The Scottish anatomist, Robert Knox, was credited to be the first to apply scientific concepts on race.[16] Knox argued in 1850 that 'race determined culture, and that the history, development and future of cultures is determined by the genetic constitution of the racial

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[11] Bolt, "Race and the Victorians," p. 127.
[12] Docker and Curthoys, What is History?, pp. 56-58.
[13] Ibid., p. 59.
[14] Ibid., p. 72.
[15] Ibid., p. 73.
[16] McConnochie, Hollinsworth and Pettmnan, Race and Racism in Australia, p. 14.

group expressing that culture.'[17] Other scientists resorted to comparative morphology and anatomy to prove the alleged biological basis of race. But it was the celebrated evolutionist Charles Darwin who gave the concept of race the scientific boost it did not deserve.[18] In his 1871 work titled *Descent of Man*, Darwin theorised that while humans descended from single specie, the struggle for survival necessitated the branching of the human specie into distinct races or groupings.[19] Herbert Spencer, on the other hand, followed Darwin's lead and formulated his theory of Social Darwinism. Spencer argued that 'the differences between human varieties' were the result of the 'inevitable destruction of those least equipped to survive.'[20]

While much of the racial theories that emerged during this period were indeed informed and inspired by science and scientific methods, the earlier presumption about the superiority of the Europeans over the non-European races continued to shape much of the thinking of scientists. In fact, this thinking remained influential, and in many cases, fundamental to the period's general approach to the study of race. Other unscrupulous scientists even purposely applied scientific procedures to establish the scientific basis of European superiority.[21] The British anthropologist James Hunt, for example, intently applied craniology and comparative anatomy to prove that the physical constitutions of Europeans was truly far more advanced compared to the blacks and the rest of humanity.[22]

Throughout the second half of the 19th century until the mid-20th century, the so-called science of race had become an important element in western scientific and political thought. In Australia, ideas about race, colour and blood had similarly assumed a powerful presence in the nation's intellectual and political life.[23] 'Always in the background,' as Henry Reynolds allegorically wrote, 'like a distant mountain chain, was anxiety about the nation or more particularly, about race...To miss this part of the story is to totally misunderstand [Australia's history].'[24] The fusion between the science of race and politics was a fatal mix in the long run. As Keith McConnochie, David Hollinsworth and Jan

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[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid., pp. 14-15.
[20] Bolt, "Race and the Victorians," p. 130.
[21] For a further discussion of this point, see Anderson, The Cultivation of Whiteness.
[22] Bolt, "Race and the Victorians," p. 129.
[23] Reynolds, Nowhere People, p. 213.
[24] Ibid., p. 218.

Pettman observed, the two 'came together in an exercise of constructing a 'scientific' argument which was used to justify the flagrant denial of human rights to many of the non-white victims of western expansion and colonialism.'[25] This practice manifested its most virulent forms in Hitler's Germany, where scientific ideas of race were deliberately deployed to justify the extermination of the Jews and other elements which were deemed unsuitable to the German body politic.[26] Race as an idea has since become an effective weapon of the state against certain groups who were perceived as threats to the 'well-being and very survival of the social body'.[27]

Shortly after the Second World War, the idea of race started to lose the scientific credibility it used to enjoy in the past one hundred years. Science itself was ultimately responsible for discrediting the very idea of race. New discoveries in biology proved that that race had no real biological basis. They proved that humans across the so-called racial groupings in fact share the same genetic makeup, that 'there are no "race specific" genes... [that] there are no "Nordic genes", or "Jewish genes" or "Negro genes".[28] Social scientists also contributed to the debate that questioned the scientific validity of race. Anthropologist Frank Livingstone, for one, contended that the differences between human populations were determined not by physiology but by the environment and geography.[29] Other postmodern social scientists insisted that the idea of race has no corresponding physical or biological reality but is in fact a mere 'social construct' created by man himself.[30] But the most damning pronouncements against race came in 1964 when UNESCO, with the backing of the international scientific and academic community, exercised its magisterial discretion and officially declared that there 'is no national, religious, geographic, linguistic or cultural group which constitutes a race ipso facto'.[31]

As the idea of race lost its integrity, the concept of racism gained wide circulation in western intellectual circles. It became, as racism historian George Fredrickson said, 'a catchall term that refers to whatever was thought and done' to the disadvantage of the so-

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[25] McConnochie, Hollinsworth and Pettmnan, Race and Racism in Australia, p. 15.
[26] Stoler, Race and the Education of Desire, p. 62.
[27] Ibid.
[28] McConnochie, Hollinsworth and Pettmnan, Race and Racism in Australia, p. 17.
[29] Frank Livingstone, "On the Non-Existence of Human Races," Current Anthropology, 3/3 (June 1962): 279-281.
[30] McConnochie, Hollinsworth and Pettmnan, Race and Racism in Australia, pp. 5-7.
[31] Lewins, "Race and Ethnic Relations," p. 12.

called coloured peoples.[32] The concept came into popular usage among scholars eager to understand one of the 20th century's greatest human tragedies—the Holocaust.[33] Apparently, the Holocaust did not only uncover Hitler's ruthless regime, it also exposed the hidden dangers of racial ideas. The scholars, having been made aware of these dangers, deployed the concept of racism to explain and ultimately, resolve practically anything that involved the antagonistic relationship between opposing groups of people. At the height of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States in the 1960s, American scholars seized the concept to write about the discriminatory practices towards African Americans.

Racism, it should be pointed out, is not a new concept. As early as 1904, American sociologist William Thomas already identified 'race prejudice' as a major cause of social friction.[34] He argued that race prejudice—which he defined loosely as the antipathetic feelings which one race feels toward another—is more often than not biologically determined. He demonstrated that humans, like any other member of the animal kingdom, possess certain reflexes and instincts that are naturally averse to strange elements in their environment. In the case of humans, moreover, the antipathy for an alien group is reinforced by the differences in the 'level of culture'.[35] Groups with higher level culture, Thomas continued, are shown to be more hostile toward members of the lower groups.

University of Chicago sociologist Robert Park affirmed Thomas' thesis that race prejudice was indeed a key factor in social conflicts. 'Nowhere do social contacts so readily provoke conflicts,' Parks said, 'as in the relations between races, particularly when racial differences are re-enforced; not merely by differences of culture, but of color.'[36] But unlike Thomas, Park believed that racial prejudice was neither biological nor cultural, a psychological issue. He argued that race prejudice was essentially a matter of attitude.[37] A

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[32] George Fredrickson, "Understanding Racism," in The Comparative Imagination: On the History of Racism, Nationalism and Social Movements, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), p. 77.
[33] George Fredrickson, Racism: A Short History, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), p. 5.
[34] William Thomas, "The Psychology of Race Prejudice," American Journal of Sociology, 9/5 (March 1904), pp. 593-611. For a brief sketch of the development of the concept of racism, see John Solomos and Les Black, "Introduction: Theorising Race and Racism," in John Solomos and Les Back, editors, Theories of Race and Racism: A Reader, (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 1-28. See also Martin Bulmer and John Solomos, editors, Ethnic and Racial Studies Today, (London: Routledge, 1999).
[35] Ibid., p. 609.
[36] Robert E. Park, Introduction to the Science of Sociology, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1924), p. 578, quoted in E. Franklin Frazier, "Sociological Theory and Race Relations," American Sociological Review, 12/3 (June 1947), p. 269.
[37] Ibid.

hostile reaction to a member of different race, he continued, is just but 'the normal tendency of the [human] mind'.[38] As Park explained:

> [Race prejudice is] is an instinctive factor based on fear of the unfamiliar and uncomprehended. Color, or any other racial mark hat emphasizes physical differences, becomes the symbol of moral divergences which perhaps do not exist. We at once fear and are fascinated by the stranger, and an individual of a different race always seems more of a stranger to us than one of our own. This naïve prejudice, unless it is re-enforced by other factors, is easily modified, as the intimate relations of the Negro and white man in slavery show.[39]

Since Thomas and Park wrote about race prejudice in the early years of the 20th century, much has changed in the way scholars understood racism Frank Lewins traced the conceptual gap between the pre-war and post-war approach to racism.[40] According to him, the pre-war scholars treated racism as a given, an 'independent variable', something that exists in vacuum, something 'not requiring explanation'.[41] These scholars were not at all concerned with providing explanations as to how racism came about.[42] But this attitude changed in the 1960s as the new generation of scholars became increasingly curious about the origins of racism. Questions which the previous scholars had completely taken for granted were subsequently asked, such as: 'What factors produce an antagonistic relationship between races? or Why are dominant races prejudiced towards, and why do they discriminate against, subordinate races?'[43] Henceforth, scholars no longer considered racism as the 'little demon that emerges in people simply because they are depraved but something to be explained.'[44]

There also have been important changes to the way racism is defined and understood. According to Fredrickson, when scholars referred to racism in the period between the Second World War and the 1960s, they generally meant 'an explicit ideology based on the putative scientific truth that population groups distinguishable from each other in physical appearance or ancestry were different and unequal in genetically determined

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[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Lewins, "Race and Ethnic Relations," pp. 10-19.
[41] Ibid., p. 13.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid., p. 12.
[44] Ibid., p. 13.

mental and behavioural capabilities.'[45] This definition changed in the late 1960s as the emphasis turned from the "subjective elements to objective elements', from personal attitudes to organised and institutionalised 'practices [that are] viewed as objectively harmful to` the interests and aspirations of people previously designated as racially inferior, even though an explicit doctrine of innate racial differences is no longer invoked as a rationale.' [46] The change in thinking and focus ultimately deepened the scholarly understanding of racism. As Fredrickson observed, '[t]he discovery of "institutional"—as opposed to "attitudinal"—racism has broadened the concept to include the discrimination that persists because institutions operate on the basis of seemingly color-blind rules and procedures that in fact deny equal opportunity to members of minority.'[47]

Since the fortuitous discovery of institutional racism in the late-1960s, the conceptual boundaries of racism had been constantly amplified and expanded by scholars who demanded for even deeper explanations. As succeeding scholars would later discover, racism was more than the belief in 19th century hierarchal racial typologies.[48] Marxists scholars, for example, discovered that class also figured prominently in racist practices than the idea of race itself. Racism, these left-leaning scholars noted, often emerged as an 'ephiphenomena of class conflict'.[49] As one Marxist scholar put it: '[Racism] is a social attitude propagated among the public by an exploiting class for the purpose of stigmatizing some groups as inferior so that the exploitation of either the group or itself or its resources may both be justified.'[50]

Some scholars emphasised the role of culture, particularly, of the awareness of cultural differences between human populations.[51] These scholars theorised that racism was rooted less on the belief in biological differences between men and women than on the belief that one's culture is different, and is in fact more superior to that of the others.[52] 'The most common forms of racism,' Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis observed, 'are to be

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[45] Fredrickson, "Understanding Racism," p. 79.
[46] Lewins, "Race and Ethnic Relations," p. 13 and Fredrickson, "Understanding Racism," pp. 79-80.
[47] Fredrickson, "Understanding Racism," p. 80.
[48] See Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis, Racialized Boundaries: Race, Nation, Gender, Colour, Class the Anti-Racist Struggle, (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 10-17.
[49] Lewins, "Race and Ethnic Relations," p. 17.
[50] Oliver Cromwell Cox, Caste, Class and Race: A Study in Social Dynamics, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1959), p. 393 quoted in ibid.
[51] See Fredrickson, Racism, pp-141-142, and Solomos and Back, "Theorising Race and Racism," pp. 19-22.
[52] McConnochie, Hollinsworth and Pettmnan, Race and Racism in Australia, pp. 30-32.

found not as explicit ideologies or discourses of biological inferiorization, but as different forms of exclusion on the basis of a group not belonging to the culture of the origin of the dominant ethnic group within the state apparatus.'[53] Stoler has similarly argued that culture is crucial to the understanding of racism, and voiced her strong opposition against scholars who myopically saw racist ideologies as being predicated strictly on late-19th and early 20th century science of race.[54] Racism, she said, was not entirely based on these theories alone. She reiterated that there is no such thing as 'pure racism'; that racism never existed in 'pure forms'; that racism has always been 'displayed in culture'.[55]

Cultural forms of racism can be observed in many immigrant-receiving countries in the West. In post-imperial Britain and France, for example, Fredrickson found that the influx of immigrants from their former colonies 'has encouraged the use of "culture" as a way of distinguishing unwelcome newcomers from those who are genuinely "British" and "French"'[56] The British and the French generally believed that these new immigrants were largely unassimilable because of the fundamental differences between cultures, values, and beliefs systems. Moreover, it was widely assumed that these immigrants cannot completely 'obliterate ethnoracial difference' even if they transform their identities.[57] In the United States, racially discriminatory practices against African Americans were being defended as reasonably appropriate in view of the 'dysfunctional' subculture that has allegedly taken possession of the soul of many black folk."[58]

Other scholars, however, were quick to point out that racism should not be confused with another culturally determined sense of difference and superiority—ethnocentrism.[59] Like racism, ethnocentrism similarly professes 'belief in the superiority and desirability of one's own culture, and the belief that all other cultures, and other individuals who belong to those cultures, are inferior.'[60] But unlike racism, ethnocentrism does not subscribe to biological theories of race. Strictly speaking, racism takes the alleged inferiority of one

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[53] Anthias and Yuval-Davis, Racialized Boundaries, p. 14.
[54] Ann Stoler, "Mixed Bloods and the Cultural Politics of European Identity in Colonial Southeast Asia" in Pieterse and Parekh, editor, The Decolonization of Imagination, pp. 128-148.
[55] Ibid., p. 128.
[56] Fredrickson, Racism, p. 142.
[57] Ibid., p. 9.
[58] Ibid., p. 142.
[59] Solomos and Back, "Theorising Race and Racism," p. 19.
[60] McConnochie, Hollinsworth and Pettmnan, Race and Racism in Australia, p. 27.

cultural group 'as being caused, at least in part, by some perceived biological inferiority of members of that group.'[61] Racism researcher Pierre Van de Berge emphasised the need to clearly distinguish between racist and ethnocentric phenomena:

> It is important to stress that racism, unlike ethnocentrism, is not a universal phenomena. Members of all human societies have a fairly good opinion of themselves compared with members of other societies, but this good opinion is frequently based on claims to cultural superiority. Man's claims to excellence are usually narcissistically based on his own creations. Only a few human groups have deemed themselves superior because of the content of their gonads. Of course, racist cultures have been ethnocentric, and some people have held that the theory that their cultures were superior because of their superior genetic pool. But the reverse is not true; many, indeed most societies have exhibited ethnocentrism without racism.[62]

Informed by the works of Michel Foucault, still another group of scholars insisted that racism is, in the last analysis, contingent to the notion of power.[63] One even insisted that racism is not really about prejudice, but about power.[64] According to these scholars, whatever one believes about biological and cultural differences between human populations is the long run inconsequential without power. Hence, racism may be considered as such only when 'power relations [are] involved', particularly, when the notion of racial or cultural inferiority is appropriated to exclude or exterminate those groups who are deemed undesirable. [65] Racism should therefore be construed not simply as a practice of differentiating and inferiorising. It is, more importantly, a practice of dominating, subordinating and colonising a group of people who are believed to be different and, therefore, undesirable. As Anthias and Yuval-Davis succinctly explained: 'Racism is not just about beliefs or statements...but about the ability to impose those beliefs or world-views as hegemonic, and as a basis for a denial of rights or equality.'[66]

Like the discovery of institutional racism in the late 1960s, the identification of power as a vital element of racism has been equally significant. Not only did it deepen the understanding of racism; it also broadened the concept to embrace a whole range of

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[61] Ibid., p. 30.
[62] Pierre Van den Berge, Race and Racism: A Comparative Perspective, (New York: J. Wiley, 1967), p. 12.
[63] Ibid., p. 9.
[64] See Ambalavaner Sivandan, "Challenging Racism: Strategies for the '80s," Race and Class, 25/2 (Autumn 1983), pp. 1-12.
[65] Anthias and Yuval-Davis, Racialized Boundaries, p. 12.
[66] Ibid., p. 16

discriminatory and exploitative practices which are previously not considered racist. What scholars now refer to as 'new racisms' was conceived precisely because of this shift in thinking.[67] Ambalavaner Sivanandan's 'xeno-racism' is case in point. Coined in 2001, xeno-racism takes the concept of racism to a whole new different light. It takes the concept away from the earlier association with scientific theory of race to one that is not necessarily determined by any notion of racial or cultural hierarchy but is nevertheless just as discriminatory, segregative and exploitative as the older forms of racism. Sivanandan described xeno-racism as

> ...a racism that is not just directed at those with darker skins, from the former colonial territories, but at the new categories of the displaced, the dispossessed and the uprooted, who are beating at western Europe's door, the Europe that helped to displace them in the first place. It is racism, that is, that cannot be colour-coded, directed as it is at poor whites as well, and is therefore passed off as xenophobia, a 'natural' fear of strangers. But in the way it denigrates and reifies people before segregating and/or expelling them, it is xenophobia that bears all the marks of old racism. It is racism in substance, but 'xeno' in form. It is a racism that is meted out to impoverished strangers even if they are white. It is xeno-racism. [68]

These developments notwithstanding, several scholars raised serious doubts over the usefulness of the concept of racism in understanding race relations within a given society. The Australian sociologist Ghassan Hage, for example, questioned the very validity of racism as conceptual framework. Racism, he criticised, is a highly politicised and emotive term. It is loaded with a whole lot of negative connotations. In sociological literature, for example, he noted that racism is being treated as a 'bad' way of thinking about the 'self' and/or 'other'. It is perceived as 'bad' both logically and politically.[69] Such a value-laden concept, he reiterated, deserves no place in any objective or scientific inquiry. Furthermore, Hage lamented that scholars have too often used the concept not so much to explain sociological events, but also to accuse and condemn the so-called racist

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[67] See Simo V. Virtanen and Leonie Huddy, "Old Fashioned Racism and New Forms of Racial Prejudice," The Journal of Politics, 60/2 (May 1998), pp. 311-332.
[68] Ambalavaner Sivanandan, "Workshop Paper for the Institute of Race Relations," Institute of Race Relation European Race Relation Bulletin, 37(June 2001), quoted in Liz Fekete, "The Emergence of Xeno-Racism," Race and Class, 43/2 (October 2001), pp. 23-24.
[69] Ghassan Hage, "The Limits of 'Anti-Racist Sociology," The UTS Review, 1/1 (July-August 1995), p. 66.

personalities and practices.[70] Some unscrupulous ones have even used the concept to promote certain political ends, such as to influence government policy or to censure certain groups.[71] He believed that scholars, being committed to the truth and reason, must not in any way become involved with partisan politics, however good or noble the intention might be. To do so is not only unprofessional and unethical; it also compromises the scholars' objectivity and intellectual independence.

Hage, moreover, believed that the concept fell miserably short of explaining how racist thinking has actually informed so-called racist practices. He asked: 'What is the relation between the practices in which racist classification are used and the classifications themselves?'[72] This important question, he said, was not adequately clarified even in the most sophisticated definition of racism. Believing that there is a hierarchy of races or culture, he insisted, is one thing, and behaving aggressively towards people from other cultural background is another. Hage explained:

> The trouble with the concept of 'racist practices' or with 'racially motivated' practices is that the belief in races or ethnicities, even the belief that there is a hierarchy of races or cultures, is not in itself a motivating ideology. Racism on its own does not carry within it an imperative for action. One can believe that there is a White race or a Black or a Yellow race. One can even believe that the White race is superior to the Black and Yellow races. There is nothing in this belief, however, that requires one to act against members of the supposed Black and Yellow races.[73]

This is not to suggest, however, that racism must be completely jettisoned from the analytical map. Racism is far from becoming analytically irrelevant. Indeed, as long people continue to construct boundaries 'between those who can and those who cannot belong to particular construction of collectivity or population' racism would not lose its relevance.[74] On its own, however, the concept lacks analytical rigour. It is imperative, as Fredrickson suggested, that racism be understood vis-à-vis other socio-cultural signifiers of human

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[70] Ibid., p. 72.
[71] Ibid., pp. 59-60.
[72] Ghassan Hage, White Nation: Fantasies of White Supremacy in a Multicultural Society, (Annandale: Pluto Press, 1998), p. 31.
[73] Ibid., p. 32.
[74] Anthias and Yuval-Davis, Racialized Boundaries, p. 2.

diversity, such as ethnicity, gender, class, religious affiliation, and so forth.[75] Fredrickson urged his fellow historians to widen their point of view, and to explain how racism is being constantly influenced and reinforced by a host of different issues across time and space:

> Like some other notable ways of construing human diversity, racism has enormous historical consequences—on the same order of importance as nationalism, sexism, class consciousness, and sectarian religious zeal...the historian faces the task of showing how a number of social and cultural constructions interact rather than proving that one is more 'real' or fundamental than the others.[76]

Fredrickson's suggestion is important to the understanding of racism in general, and of the inter-ethnic tensions, rivalries, and conflicts in particular. The study of the white Australian-Chinese relation in the 19th century Australia will certainly gain from this insightful suggestion. Rather than rehearse time and again that the strong anti-Chinese feelings among colonial Australians were racist, it will certainly be more fruitful in the long run if other socio-cultural constructions of human difference deep inside the white Australians psyche are also taken into account. To do so will not only lead to a deeper appreciation of the complex dynamics of colonial Australian society, but also avoid the reductionist and essentialist tendencies of a simplistic racist explanation.

The succeeding section will propose the study of anti-Chinese hostilities in colonial Australia from the framework of Said's Orientalism. It will suggest that, like the other great signifiers of human diversity which Fredrickson has earlier identified, Orientalism played an important part in delineating the differences between the white Australian majority and the Chinese minority. These Orientalist differences, like the prevailing 19th century theories of race, nurtured among colonial Australians a deep sense of superiority and intolerance towards the Oriental 'other'. As Homi Bhabha similarly pointed out in a slightly different context, Orientalism is 'crucial to the binding of a range of differences and discriminations that inform the discursive and political practices of racial hierarchisation.'[77]

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[75] Fredrickson, "Understanding Racism," p. 78. See also Ann Stoler and Fredrick Cooper, "Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda," in Frederick Cooper and Ann Stoler, editors, Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World, (Berkley: University of California Press, 1997), p. 34, and Stuart Hall, "Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities," in Solomos and Back, editors, Theories of Race and Racism, pp. 144-153.

[76] Fredrickson, "Understanding Racism," p. 78.

[77] Homi Bhabha, "Difference, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism," in Francis Barker, et al., The Politics of Theory, (Colchester: University of Essex, 1983), p. 194.

Orientalism as an Alternative Analytical Framework to Racism

The term Orientalism has long been in circulation to refer to a wide variety of western practices relating to the Orient. It was believed to be coined by British colonial officials in the 18th century to define a specific policy of utilising local languages, customs and traditions to govern the colonies and other possessions.[78] Then in the early 19th century, the term was applied to characterise an artistic movement in Europe which drew its inspiration from the arts of the Middle East, India, China, Japan, and curiously, even North Africa.[79] Later on, it was expanded to refer collectively to the 'study of the languages, literature, religions, thought, art and social life of the East'[80] This once innocuous term, however, assumed a strong 'normative tone' soon after the publication of Said's *Orientialism* in 1978.[81] Said elaborated in this highly influential book what he believed as Orientalism's power to dominate. There is hardly anything erudite with Orientalism, he reiterated. Far from being a noble scholarly pursuit, Orientalism is, in fact, an agent of Western imperialism—of the West's 'intellectual and technical dominance' over the Orient.[82] It is the 'extension of political, military and economy' of the West.[83] It is a means by which the West could easily capture and readily assert its right to rule over the Orient.[84] Orientalism is, in short, the West's 'emblem of domination' and 'weapon of power' over the Orient.[85]

Fortuitously for scholars, Said did not simply divulge Orientalism's ulterior imperialist agenda, he also carefully identified and outlined the ways Orientalism has been fabricated and carried out its hegemonic practices. His main purpose, after all, was to pose an 'adversarial critique' not only of the Orientalism's 'perspective and political economy', but also of the 'sociocultural situation' that makes Orientalism's power to dominate possible and sustainable.[86] The challenge, according to Said, is for scholars to uncover and

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[78] John Mackenzie, Orientalism: History, Theory ands the Arts, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), p. xii.
[79] Ibid., p. xiii.
[80] Ibid., p. xii.
[81] Ibid., p. xii.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Edward Said, "Representing the Colonised: Anthropology's Interlocutors," Critical Inquiry, 15/2 (Winter 1989), p. 210.

disarm Orientalism's subordinating capability, 'to expose its oppressive system, [and] to "clear the archive" of its received ideas and static images'.[87] 'Epistemologies, discourses, and methods like Orientalism,' Said wrote, 'are scarcely worth the name if they are reductively characterized as objects like shoes, patched when worn out, discarded and placed with new objects when old and unfixable. The archival dignity, institutional authority, and patriarchal longevity of Orientalism should be taken seriously because in the aggregate these traits function as a worldview with considerable political force not easily brushed away as so much epistemology.'[88]

An adversarial critique of Orientalism, Said forewarned, can be difficult.[89] In fact, it can be very problematic considering Orientalism's long established code of practice, 'history and a tradition of thought, imagery, and vocabulary' that are widely accepted, recognised and understood in either side of the Western and Oriental worlds.[90] Moreover, Orientalism is being supported by a whole network of institutions and personalities who have a particular interest in the Orient, such as scholars and academics, travellers, commercial enterprises, governments, the military, pilgrims, readers of novels and other accounts about the Orient, and the consumers of Oriental products and services.[91]

The hegemonic presence of Orientalism in the intellectual and cultural life of the West poses another difficulty. As Said stressed, it 'is hegemony or rather the result of cultural hegemony at work that gives Orientalism the durability and strength'.[92] Orientalist knowledge has attained a high academic value, and an almost canonical status. It has achieved an important 'cultural leadership' role in Western epistemology after many generations of constant use and practice.[93] Orientalism has practically become a 'teachable wisdom'; it has become

> ...a created body of theory and practice in which, for many generations, there has been a considerable material investment. Continued investment made Orientalism, as a system of knowledge about the Orient, an accepted grid for filtering through the Orient

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[87] James Clifford, "Review Essay: Orientalism," History and Theory, 19/2 (February 1980), p. 213.
[88] Ibid., pp. 201-221.
[89] Said thoroughly addressed the methodological issues confronting critics of Orientalism in Orientalism, pp. 15-28.
[90] Ibid., p. 5.
[91] Ibid., p. 3.
[92] Ibid., p. 7.
[93] Ibid., pp. 6-7.

> into Western consciousness, just as that same investment multiplied—indeed, made truly productive—the statements proliferating out from Orientalism into the general culture. [94]

Notwithstanding these difficulties, an adversarial critique of Orientalism is nevertheless possible. This, according to Said, can be undertaken if Orientalism is regarded not simply as a form of knowledge but also as a form of discourse relating to the Orient. "My contention' Said insisted, 'is that without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage—and even reproduce—the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively..."[95] By discourse, Said was, of course, referring to Foucault's definition of discourse—to discourse as a normative body of knowledge and ideas circulating in a society; to discourse as a regularised way of thinking about certain topics and issues; to discourse as 'a body of rigid cultural definitions which determine what any individual can express about a certain actuality', to discourse as a 'mode of constraint and control'.[96]

Said's identification of Orientalism as a discourse has opened a new avenue with which to study and more importantly, dismantle Orientalism. By treating Orientalism as discourse, Said was able to uncover the hitherto unknown facets of Orientalism which many scholars before him have glossed over or failed to take notice. In particular, he was able to reveal the 'limitation on thought and action imposed by Orientalism', as well as the 'the whole network of interests inevitably brought to bear on...any occasion when that peculiar entity "the Orient" is in question'.[97] In short, by identifying Orientalism as discourse, Said has, in effect, exposed Orientalism's underlying political purpose, hegemonic intention, and discursive practice.

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[94] Ibid., p. 6.

[95] Said, Orientalism, p. 3.

[96] Contrary to Foucault's definition of discourse, however, Said believed that individual authors played an important role in the production of any discourse. This is particularly true in Orientalism's case. The 'imprint' of individual authors, he insisted, is but too obvious to be overlooked in the discourse of Orientalism. Said explained: 'Yet unlike Michel Foucault...I do believe in the determining imprint of individual writers upon otherwise anonymous collective body of texts constituting formation like Orientalism. The unity of the large ensemble of texts I analyse is due in part to the fact that they frequently refer to each other: Orientalism is after all a system for citing works and authors.' Ibid., p. 23. See Michel Foucault, The Archaeology of Knowledge, (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), and Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison, (London: Allen Lane, 1977). Clifford, "Review Essay," p. 212. Docker and Curthoys, Is History Fiction?, p. 183.

[97] Said, Orientalism, p. 3.

Like other forms of discourses, Said explained that Orientalism is a nexus of both knowledge and power.[98] He emphasised that Orientalist knowledge is not really objective as it has often been perceived to be. On the contrary, Orientalism is a highly political and heavily politicised body of knowledge. In the first place, the production of Orientalism is in itself a political act. It is 'tinged and impressed with, violated by' the Orientalist's personal beliefs and value systems, class and social positions, as well as political allegiances and loyalties. The Orientalist, Said argued, will never be completely isolated from his personal upbringing, from his own 'actuality', from 'his own circumstances' as an individual.[99] He will never be totally detached 'from the circumstances of life, from the fact of his involvement (conscious or unconscious) with a class, a set of beliefs, a social position, or from the mere activity of being a member of a society.' [100] He will never be truly neutral and value-free towards his subject matter.[101]

But the biggest constraint to the Orientalist's creativity and intellectual independence is rooted on the fact of his being a Westerner. As a Westerner looking at and speaking in behalf of the Orient, it is inevitable that 'he comes up against the Orient as a European or American first, as an individual second.'[102] As a Westerner, he carries with him a heavy cultural baggage. He carries with him the preconceived notions, assumptions and prejudices of his own culture which, needless to say, effectively colour his account of the Orient. These cannot be shaken off easily, Said believed, because the Orientalist is inescapably involved 'as a human subject in his own circumstances'.[103]

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[98] Ibid., p. 27.
[99] Ibid., p. 11.
[100] Ibid., pp. 10-11.
[101] Ibid., p. 203.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Said, Orientalism, p. 11. This is not to say, however, that Said has rejected outright the positive value of Orientalist scholarship as a whole. Far from denying the authenticity of a scholar's production, he has, in fact, acknowledged the 'possibility of freedom, of the intellectual's ability to think through any problematic no matter how forbidding, to develop resistance to the tempting conclusions of established dogma, and to make methodological choices that will respond to the most exacting criteria of accountability.' But unfortunately, the scholar of Orientalism seldom makes an effort to overcome the limitations posed by their givenness. In most cases, the scholar even worked as an accomplice who perpetuated this intellectually restricting and confining tradition. Said, according to his intellectual biographer Abdirahman Hussein, charted Orientalism's long intellectual history precisely to prove the failure of generations of scholars to resist the constrictive intellectual environment which they have to work in. 'In Said's estimation,' Hussein explained, 'that resistance has rarely manifested itself in the field of Orientalism now or in the past. Both in [Said's] Orientalism and in the numerous later texts about Orientalist tradition, he tries to show the extent to which Orientalist modes of representation continue to permeate Euro-American public discourse, contributing to an

The Orientalist's failure to produce an objective knowledge of the Orient is not, however, entirely his own fault. Much of the blame could indeed be pinned down on certain political realities concerning the West's involvement with the Orient which, according to Said, have a negating effect on the intellectual integrity of Orientalist undertaking. There is no need to rehearse here in detail the specifics of these realities. Other venues have appropriately addressed these topics and issues at hand.[104] Suffice it to say, the West-Orient relations is not a relationship between equals. The West has a definite political, economic and strategic interest in the Orient, and, as previous studies have shown, the relationship between the West and the Orient is 'a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony'.[105]

Said apparently believed that these political realities played an ominous role on how the Orient came to be introduced, measured up, and then subsequently understood in Western culture, consciousness and learning. 'My idea is that European and then American interest in the Orient was political,' Said said, 'but that it was the culture that created that interest, that acted dynamically along with brute political, and military rationales to make the Orient the varied and complicated place that it obviously was in the field I call Orientalism.'[106] These realities informed the scholar's point of view. It also shaped the epistemological categories which the scholar would later employ to view, explain and understand the Orient. A Westerner studying the Orient, as Said insisted, 'is by no means an inert fact. It meant and means being aware, however dimly, that one belongs to a power with definite interest in the Orient, and more important, that one belongs to a part of the earth with a definite history of involvement in the Orient'.[107]

Said's critique of Orientalism did not, however, stop at the simple knowledge production. His criticism, or more appropriately, polemical stance against Orientalism went far beyond this basics step. He also criticised, for instance, the manner in which Orientalism is being nefariously deployed to promote certain political ends, specifically, the West's imperialist interest in the Orient. Said believed that Orientalism was invented not

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almost perpetual climate of hostility in relations between the [Orient] and the West.'. Abdirahman Hussein, Edward Said: Criticism and Society, (London and New York: Verso Books, 2002), p. 240.

[104] See for example, P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, British Imperialism, (New York: Longman, 2002), and Cooper and Stoler, editors, Tensions of Empire.

[105] Said, Orientalism, p. 4.

[106] Ibid., p. 12.

[107] Ibid., p. 11.

out of a genuine interest to know the Orient, but out of the need to legitimise, sustain and further the cause of Western imperialism. As Said asserted, to possess knowledge about the Orient (or anything for that matter) 'is to dominate it, to have authority over it...to deny autonomy to it.'[108] In short, Said's objection to Orientalism was not so much with the question of validity of Orientalist production of knowledge than with the sinister purpose Orientalist knowledge was and is still is being produced, sustained and circulated to advance and perpetuate Western hegemonic interests over the non-Western parts of the globe.

The crux of Said's criticism was centred on the peculiar way Orientalism has portrayed the Orient. Orientalism, he argued, has locked up the Orient in certain essentialist images which have little or no 'corresponding reality' with the 'real' Orient.[109] It confined of the Orient 'to the fixed status of an object frozen once and for all in time by the gaze of western percipients.'[110] It created enduring images, representations and ideas of and about the Orient that have become regularised, accepted, and understood in the Western psyche as being of the Orient itself. It essentialised—or in Said's own terminology, 'Orientalised'—the Orient in such a way that the Orient seemed 'morally neutral and objectively valid; it seemed to have an epistemological status equal to that of historical chronology or geographical location'.[111] But in reality, the Orient that Orientalism has created and appropriated is just an imaginary Orient; it is 'essentially an idea', a mere creation of the Orientalist imagination.[112]

The Orientalisation of the Orient is by no means the result of some historical accident. On the contrary, it arose as a direct consequence of the 'European-Atlantic power' over the Orient; of the West's 'positional superiority' over the Orient.[113] Because the West is stronger than the Orient economically, militarily and strategically speaking, it easily subverted the Orient to its imperialistic design. It was able to colonise the Orient, and take firm hold of its social, political and economic resources. It also took control of the knowledge of the Orient. It became the arbiter of what can and cannot be known about the

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[108] Ibid., p. 32.
[109] Ibid.
[110] Edward Said, "Orientalism Reconsidered," Race and Class, 27/2 (Autumn 1985), p. 4.
[111] Said, Orientalism, p. 5 and 205.
[112] Ibid., p. 5.
[113] Ibid., p. 6 and 7.

Orient. As Said put it: 'The Orient was Orientalised not only because it was discovered to be "Oriental" in all those ways considered commonplace by [the West], but also because it *could* be—that is, submitted to being—*made* Oriental.[114]

Orientalism and the Australian Studies

Orientalism can thus be 'regarded as a manner of regularised (or Orientalized) writing, vision and study, dominated by imperatives, perspectives, and ideological biases suited to the Orient.'[115] And because of the relative strength of the West over the Orient, the West was able to define and dictate the epistemological categories, as well as the social boundaries of what can and cannot be said about the Orient. It portrayed the Orient 'not as Europe's interlocutor' but as its inferior, 'silent Other'.[116] It marked the Orient 'negatively', 'by inferiority and secondariness', by images of 'abnormality', 'sensuality', 'inaccuracy', 'aberrant mentality' and 'backwardness'.[117]

Said's portrayal of Orientalism drew hostile reactions from scholars across the disciplines. For one, his critique of Orientalism has been dismissed for essentializing both the Orient and the West. This, ironically, is the very same reason Said criticised the practitioners of Orientalism. 'It is claimed," Hussein thus noted, that Said has fallen into the 'very sins for which he castigates Orientalists—for example, by drawing a neat binary divide between the West and the Orient, he essentialises both from the outset.'[118] Said was also criticised for 'exaggerating' the negative aspects of Orientalism at the expense of other Orientalists who exhibited complete scholarly empathy towards the Orient and its people.[119] He was attacked for confusing, instead of enlightening, the scholars on how the Orient can be properly understood. Finally, his critique, according to some quarters, was self-defeating and utterly pointless:

> [W]hile condemning Orientalist discourse for creating a simulacrum which, in the manner of a caricature, both stands in for and obfuscates the complex realties of the Orient, Said himself is incapable of telling us just exactly what the real Orient is and is

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[114] Ibid., pp. 5-6.
[115] Ibid., p. 202.
[116] Said, "Orientalism Reconsidered," pp. 4-5.
[117] Edward Said, "An Ideology of Difference," Critical Inquiry, 12/1 (Autumn 1985), pp. 43 and 44, and Said, Orientalism, p. 205.
[118] Hussein, Edward Said, p. 228.
[119] Ibid.

> not; that he knowingly or otherwise utilizes a species of epistemology which at once assumes and denies the possibility of neutrally communicable, intersubjectively shareable knowledge; that he posits an ethics of human emancipation but relies on a severely deterministic version of historicism which thwarts the achievability of that very goal.[120]

Despite these misgivings, a huge plethora of books, monographs, scholarly articles and reviews has been generated in 'direct response' to Said's critique of Orientalism 'or as extensions, appropriation and refinements' of his arguments or his 'critical vocabulary.'[121] *Orientalism* has been warmly picked up especially by anti-imperialist, feminists and the so-called Third World intellectuals. It has also enriched area studies, anthropology and ethnography, history and historiography, and of course, post-colonial studies.[122] These scholars and the disciplines whence they come apparently found Said's polemic against Orientalism convincing, and his 'critical technology' powerful and compelling.[123] The power of *Orientalism*, as one of Said's intellectual followers pointed out, 'can be attributed not (or not merely to) the specific content of its argument…but rather to its unconventional mode of presentation, a strategy which allows its author both to up-end received wisdom and to open up an old conceptual terrain for re-examination under a new, more corrosive light.'[124]

Said's *Orientalism* barely made an impact in Australian studies, and more so, in Chinese-Australian studies. Australian scholars were less enthusiastic and often unresponsive apparently because of Said's militant and aggressive anti-Western stance. The polemics of controversial Australian commentator Keith Windschuttle may very well provide a clue to the Australian scholars' reluctance to accept Said and Orientalism.[125] Windschuttle downplayed Said's assault on the legitimacy of Orientalism insisting that 'Oriental studies [were] in fact one of the first fields within European scholarship to overcome ethnocentric prejudices and to open the Western mind to the whole of

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[120] Ibid.
[121] Ibid., p. 229.
[122] Ibid.
[123] Ibid., p. 228.
[124] Ibid.
[125] Keith Windschuttle, "Edward Said's Orientalism Revisited," Quadrant, 44/1-2 (January-February 2000): 21-27.

humanity.'[126] He vigorously dismissed Said's alleged hypocritical criticism of the ill effects of the West's hegemonic culture on the Orient. He said that Said was himself a product and a direct beneficiary of this very same culture (he claimed that Said was a natural-born American citizen of Palestinian descent who was educated in Western schools throughout his life):

> Coming from any grown up, such wallowing in victimhood would be bad enough, but from a tenured full professor at Columbia University in New York City—that is from the most materially and occupationally privileged human beings on the planet, who enjoys the added indulgences of being permitted to make whatever criticisms he fancies of that country [and by extension, the whole Western culture] that sustains him—it is simply embarrassing.[127]

Nevertheless, several Australian scholars did venture into the new conceptual terrain opened up by Said. Their work has yielded quite interesting conclusions. John Docker, for instance, has revealed how Orientalist fantasies, especially the 'desire for non-English exotic and Oriental others' have been 'created, dreamed, fantasied [and] played [up]' in both formal and popular Australian literatures.[128] Art historians Rachel Kent and Ursula Prunster have echoed the same observation in their respective researches on the so-called Australian 'Orientalist' art. [129] Both have emphasised how the 'study of orientalism...offers a way which the contemporary scholar might consider western expansionist history, its impact on other cultures, and—more importantly—their profound impact upon the history of European and Australian art.'[130] Kent's study, in particular, has demonstrated the various ways 'in which Australian artists responded to the Orient', and, at the same time, exposed the 'political backdrop' and the 'common preconceptions and inherent biases' against which Australian Orientalist art was produced.[131] Prunster, on the other hand, discovered that 'Australian awareness of Orientalism followed this pattern of

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[126] Ibid., p. 24.
[127] Ibid., p. 27.
[128] John Docker, "Feminism, Modernism, and Orientalism in *The Home* in the 1920s," in Ann Curthoys and Julianne Schultz, editors, Journalism: Print, Politics and Popular Culture, (St. Lucia: Queensland University Press), p. 126, and The Nervous Nineties: Australian Cultural Life in the 1890s, (Melbourne: Oxford University Press Australia, 1991), especially, Chapters 17, 18 and 19.
[129]Rachel Kent, "Chimerical Geographies: European and Australian Painters in the Orient," Art and Australia, 36/1 (1998): 58-67 and Ursula Prunster, "From Empire's End: Australians as Orientalist, 1880-1920," in Roger Benjamin, curator and editor, Orientalism: Delacroix to Klee, (Sydney: Art Gallery of New South Wales, 1997), pp. 41-53
[130] Kent, "Chimerical Geographies," p. 67.
[131] Ibid.

reference back to European knowledge, to the dissemination of cultural concepts through the Empire's channel of communication.'[132] 'Itself an aspect of the culture of imperialism and colony-building, Orientalist art' she argued, 'takes on, in the Australian context, an intriguing ambivalence. Australian Orientalist practice dictated the terms of the artists' self-awareness according to a European ideology of dominance, against which they can also be seen as colonials—"not quite" possessing mastery.'[133]

There also have been meaningful attempts to relate Said's *Orientalism* to the study of race relations in Australia. Ivan Krisjansen, for example, employed the 'conceptual model derived from the writings of...Said' to show how popular Orientalist images of Chinese labour became instrumental in assigning, legitimising, and enforcing 'qualitative differences' between the Chinese and the White settlers, on the one hand, and in articulating, defining, and actualising the colonial South Australian government's racial segregation on the other.[134] Journalist Peter Manning's critical examination of Australian newspaper reports of Arabic and Muslim peoples has drawn valuable insights from this book to expose the role played by the Australian print media in vilifying the Australia's Muslim community in particular, and the Arabs, Islam, and the Middle East in general.[135] He discovered that the media's biased, stereotypical and 'Orientalist' reporting of the Tampa affair, the gang rapes in Sydney, the Palestinian intifada, the 11 September 2001 World Trade Centre bombing in New York, the Bali bombings, the Iraq War and recently, the Cronulla riots was, to a large extent, responsible for fuelling popular anti-Muslim sentiments in Australia.

On their own, the works of Docker, Kent, Prunster, Krisjansen and Manning (as well as the works of several others who are not mentioned here) have been important not only for the insights that they have generated, but also for their contribution to the broadening of Australian studies' conceptual field. This study aims to do the same. It intends to enlarge the purview of Australian history, particularly of Chinese Australian

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[132] Prunster, "From Empire's End," p. 41.
[133] Ibid., p. 41.
[134] Ivan Krisjansen, "Australian Orientalism and Liberal Governance," Labour History, 80 (May 2001), pp. 173 and 188.
[135] Peter Manning, 'Dog Whistle Politics' and Journalism: Reporting of Arabic and Muslim People in Sydney Newspapers, (Sydney: The Australian Centre for Independent Journalism, University of Technology Sydney, 2004). See also Peter Manning, Us and Them: A Journalist's Investigation of Media , Muslims and the Middle East, (Miltons Point: Random House Australia, 2006).

history, by applying *Orientalism's* 'critical technology' to the study of 19th century relations between the white Australian settlers and the Chinese immigrants. This will, hopefully, divert from the worn out racism framework which scholars have long been using to explain the strong anti-Chinese attitudes among Australians, and at the same time, derive new insights into the nature of 19th century colonial Australian society.

Chapter 3
A Genealogy of Orientalist Discourse of the Chinese in Colonial Australia

This chapter, as well as the next, is an attempt to put Said's ideas about Orientalism into the actual writing of the history of the Chinese in Australia. It illustrates how the entire body of Orientalist 'ideas, beliefs, clichés or learning' about the Chinese perpetuated a negative stereotype, and facilitated the proliferation of anti-Chinese feelings in early colonial Australia.[1] In doing so, these two chapters will chart the trajectory of Orientalist discourse of the Chinese since its creation in the early 1840s until shortly after the Gold Rush period.

In the meantime, this chapter traces the founding moment of Orientalist discourse of the Chinese in colonial Australia. This exercise is necessary. In fact, it is crucial and highly relevant to the project at hand. After all, a full understanding of how the discourse of Orientalism perpetrated anti-Chinese feelings among colonial Australians could never be achieved without illuminating how such a discourse came to be constructed in the first place. As Said himself said, establishing that 'first step', that 'point of departure', that 'beginning principle,' is important notwithstanding the restrictions it may impose on the scholar, the sources and the subject matter.[2] 'Beginnings,' Said further emphasised, 'have to be made for each project in such a way as to *enable* what follows from them.'[3]

Early Images of the Chinese in Colonial Australia

The Chinese had long been a part of the Australian psyche. As a matter of fact, they figured prominently in the planning and later, the decision to settle New South Wales. The major proponents of the colonisation of New South Wales, James Matra and Sir George Young, spoke highly of the Chinese as potential settlers.[4] '[A]ny number of useful inhabitants from China', Matra said, would be beneficial to the proposed colony of New South Wales, in the same way these people had earlier been instrumental to the

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[1] Said, Orientalism, p. 205.
[2] Ibid., p. 15.
[3] Ibid., p. 16.
[4] Choi, Chinese Migration and Settlement in Australia, p. 18.

development of Dutch colonies in Asia.[5] Young seconded Matra's view, and pushed for the immediate establishment of links with China. He believed that China could be a convenient source of both settlers and victuals for the new colony. The Mother Country, according to Young, should not worry about losing her people to the new colony because the 'settlers of New South Wales are principally to be collected from the Friendly Islands and China. All the people required from England are only a few that are possessed of the useful arts and those comprised among the crews of the ships sent on that service.'[6] Neither should the Mother Country be worried about the inconvenience of supplying the needs of the colony. China, he assumed, 'lies not more than about a thousand leagues' from New South Wales, and in times of exigencies, the Chinese port of Canton could easily provide the much needed provisions.[7]

Of course, neither of the two proposals materialised. The British Government was apparently too engrossed with its own convict problem for it to consider such a farsighted scheme.[8] The plan to procure victuals from China and immigrants from the nearby islands was completely dropped from the final blueprint of the colonisation of New South Wales.[9] For one reason or another, the government even decreed the isolation of the proposed antipodean colony by restricting any form of contact with foreign ports. 'It is our royal intention', the instruction said,

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[5] "James Maria Matra's Proposal, 23 August 1783," in Historical Records of New South Wales, Vol. 1, Part 2, (Sydney: Charles Potter, Government Printer, 1892), p. 3.

[6] "Sir George Young's Plan, 13 January 1785" in Historical Records of New South Wales, Vol. 1, Part 2, p. 12.

[7] Ibid., pp. 11 and 13.

[8] Disposing the convicts at once was top priority of the Home Government. The royal instruction to Governor Philip reflected the government's sense of urgency: 'It is our royal will and pleasure that upon your arrival at Botany Bay, on the said coast of New South Wales you do cause every possible exertion to be made for disembarking the officers and men composing the civil and military establishments, together with the convicts, stores, provisions, etc., and having done so, you are to discharge all the said transports or victuallers, in order that such of them as may be engaged by the East India Company may proceed to China, and that the rest may return.' "Governor Phillip's Second Commission, 2 April 1787, and Instruction, 25 April 1787," in The Historical Records of Australia, Series 1, Volume 1, (Sydney: The Library Committee of the Commonwealth Parliament, 1914), p. 11.

[9] The blueprint outlined only the immediate concern of the new colony: 'According to the best information we have obtained, Botany Bay appears to be the most eligible situation upon the said coast for the first establishment, possessing a commodious harbour and other advantages which no part of the coast hitherto discover affords. It is therefore our will and pleasure that you do immediately upon your landing, after taking measures for securing yourself and the people who accompany you as much as possible from any attacks or interruptions of the natives of that country, as well as for the preservation and safety of the public stores, proceed to the cultivation of the land, distributing the convicts for that purpose in such manner, and under such inspectors and overseers, and under such regulations as may appear to you to be necessary and best calculated for procuring supplies and ground provisions.' Ibid.

> that every sort of intercourse between the intended settlement at Botany Bay or other place which may be hereafter established on the coast of New South Wales and its dependencies, and the settlements of our East India Company, as well as the coast of China, and the islands situated in that part of the world, to which any intercourse has been established by any European nation, should be prevented by every possible means: It is our royal will and pleasure that you do not on any account allow craft of any sort to be built for the use of private individuals which might enable them to effect such intercourse, and that you do prevent any vessels which may at any time hereafter arrive at the said settlement from any of the ports before mentioned from having communication with any of the inhabitants residing within your Government, without first receiving especial permission from you for that purpose.[10]

Thus, until the colonial economy became self-sufficient in the first half of the 19th century, New South Wales remained isolated from the rest of the non-British world. But despite being obviated from the official discourse, China did not completely recede from the popular Australian psyche. The transported convicts, in particular, conjured a mental picture of China that evoked both their longings for freedom and a better life ahead.[11] Writing shortly after her transportation in 1788, an unidentified female convict expressed her sadness over the miserable state of affairs at New South Wales, but was comforted by the 'hopes of a supply of tea from China' which, according to local legend of the period, was only 'about as far as Bristol was from London, or Dublin from Cork: about a fortnight on foot'.[12] The more adventurous among the lot did indeed 'walk' their way to China. In his report to Undersecretary Evan Nepean of the Home Office, Governor Phillip noted how a growing number of Irish convicts were deserting their respective assignments 'to go to China, which they suppose to be at the distance of only hundred and fifty miles' from Sydney.[13] Apparently, these desperate prisoners thought that China was the land of freedom where new life could be started anew.[14]

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[10] Ibid., pp. 15-16.
[11] Alan Atkinson, The Europeans in Australia: A History, Volume 1, (London: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 188.
[12] Ibid., pp. 124 and 188.
[13] "Governor Philip to Undersecretary Nepean, 18 November 1791," in Historical Records of NSW, Vol. 1, Part 2, p. 556. See also Ken Inglis, The Australian Colonist: An Exploration of Social History, 1788-1870, (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1974), p. 169.
[14] See Inglis, Australian Colonist, pp. 168-177.

The Wakefieldian Dream and the Asian Labour Proposals

The Chinese did not resurface in official discourse until towards the end of 1820s. Edward Gibbon Wakefield was arguably the one responsible for bringing these people back into the official epistemological map of early 19th century Australia. Through his much discussed 1829 work titled *A Letter from Sydney*, Wakefield brought to the fore the previously shelved proposals of Matra and Young to procure Chinese settlers for Australia.[15] According to Wakefield, the immigration of the Chinese was necessary in order to maintain the 'correct proportion between land and labour' in the Australian colonies.[16] There was enough land in Australia, he said, but not enough labour. Britain alone could not possibly satisfy the colonies' insatiable need for labour notwithstanding its reported 'excess of people'.[17] He insisted that it was only the Chinese, with their strong 'population of 300,000,000', who could easily supply the growing labour needs of colonies.[18] To support his proposal, he assembled, in characteristic 19th century fashion, an encyclopaedic list of evidence attesting to the suitability and dependability of the Chinese as skilled immigrants.[19] He optimistically declared that if the Chinese were eventually allowed to immigrate, the Australian colonies would 'in the course of a century' be converted from an 'enormous wilderness into a fruitful garden.'[20]

The British Government eagerly took Wakefield's ideas for a systematic colonisation of Australia.[21] In 1831, it adopted his suggestion to set up strict regulation on

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[15] Edward Gibbon Wakefield, "A Letter from Sydney," in M.F. Llyod Prichard, editor, The Collected Works of Edward Gibbon Wakefield, (Glasgow and London: Collins, 1968): 99-185.

[16] Prichard, editor, The Collected Works of Edward Gibbon Wakefield, p. 16. According to Wakefield, the prosperity of any country lies on the 'correct proportion between land and labour'. New countries like Australia should strive to achieve and maintain this right balance to ensure their survival and progress. This meant putting up a strict regulation on the price, distribution and use of lands 'instead of bestowing them gratis,—instead of persuading people to accept of them' as what the colonial governments of New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land had earlier done. This also meant attracting and using labour efficiently, particularly, the labour of free emigrants from Britain and from China. Wakefield, "A Letter from Sydney," p. 159.

[17] Wakefield, "A Letter from Sydney," p. 170.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid., pp. 17-177. See also Edward Gibbon Wakefield, "England and America: A Comparison of the Social and Political State of Both Nations," in Prichard, editor, The Collected Works of Edward Gibbon Wakefield, pp. 311-636, especially "Appendix 1: Proofs of the Industry, Skill and Commercial Disposition of the Chinese People," pp. 589-602.

[20] Wakefield, "A Letter from Sydney," p. 170.

[21] See "Viscount Goderich to Governor Darling, 9 January 1831," in Historical Records of Australia, Series 1, Volume 16, pp. 20-21. See also John Molony, The Penguin History of Australia, (Ringwood: Penguin, 1988), pp. 63-64.

the pricing, distribution, and the use of the colonies' land resources.[22] That same year, it adopted his proposal to subsidise the emigration of British citizens to Australia. Initially only unmarried female immigrants were given free passage.[23] Assistance was later extended to male immigrants.[24] But nothing seems to have been said and done about the proposal to introduce Chinese settlers to Australia. The official records of the period were surprisingly silent on this matter. Considering Wakefield's immense influence on the period's imperial policies, it remains unclear why the British Government took no notice of this particular proposal.[25] Perhaps it was not interested at the Chinese at all, or it could be the question of the legality of Chinese immigration. The Chinese, it should be remembered, were not allowed, under existing laws, to leave China until the mid-19th century.[26] It was only at the behest of the British Government during the 1860 Convention of Peking that the Chinese emperor Xianfeng officially permitted emigration.[27] The government must have felt that any discussion concerning Chinese immigration was still premature. It could also be due to the uncertainty of British relations with China. China had repeatedly shrugged off Britain's attempt to establish formal diplomatic and trade relations since the uneventful mission of Lord Macartney in 1793.[28] It was not until after the First Opium War (1839-1842) that China reluctantly conceded to British demands.[29]

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[22] Molony, Penguin History of Australia, p. 64.
[23] "Viscount Goderich to Bourke, 18 September 1831," in Historical Records of Australia, Series 1, Volume 16, p. 379.
[24] "Lord Glenelg to Bourke, 20 June 1835," in ibid., Series 1, Volume 17, p. 739.
[25] Wakefield, an ex-convict, became popular and politically influential soon after the publication of his "A Letter from Sydney". "A Letter from Sydney", as well Wakefield's other works, provided the British Government with ideas for systematic colonisation and assisted migration. Wakefield himself figured prominently in the colonisation debates across Australia, Canada and New Zealand. The British Government regarded him as one of the leading authorities on colonisation. It relied heavily on his advices and opinions, and even appointed him to several parliamentary inquiries. Prichard, editor, The Collected Works of Edward Gibbon Wakefield, pp. 9-91.
[26] Jonathan Spence, The Search for Modern China, (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company Ltd., 1999), p. 183. This is not to say, however, that no Chinese had emigrated before the official ban was lifted in 1860. On the contrary, thousands of Chinese immigrants were leaving the country despite the prohibition. Domestic turmoil and natural calamities were often blamed for this large scale (illegal) emigration. In Australia, there were nearly 39,000 Chinese immigrants by 1861. The law prohibiting emigration was often followed in the breach. Arthur Huck, The Chinese in Australia, (Croydon: Longmans of Australia Pty. Limited, 1967), pp. 1-3.
[27] Spence, Search for Modern China, p. 183.
[28] Ibid., pp. 122-123.
[29] Ibid., pp. 160-162.

Wakefield's proposal was shelved for several years. In the wake of an impending labour shortage crisis in 1836, John Mackay revived and reworked the proposal.[30] But instead of Chinese labourers, Mackay offered Indian labourers, and instead of free immigration, he recommended an indentured system of immigration. Mackay's choice of Indian labourers was understandable: he was once an 'indigo planter and merchant' in Bengal, India.[31] His proposal outlined that the Indian labourers would come and work in Australia for a period of no less than ten years, earning fixed wages and rations every month (presumably lower than the wages and rations being received by Europeans).[32] At the end of ten-year period, the labourers would be shipped back to India. The duration of employment could, of course, be extended indefinitely, but in no way could they be engaged 'without being bound for some time', because 'if they come here as free agents many will not be employed at all, but will prefer working, as they do in India, when want compels them; and the probability is, that the whole of them will become worthless, and a pest to society.'[33]

Mackay was hoping to get official approval when he submitted the Indian labour proposal to Sir Richard Bourke, the then governor of New South Wales, in October 1836. Bourke apparently liked the idea, for he convened the Select Committee on Immigration on 30 May 1837 to look at the proposal more closely. In his address to the Legislative Council, Bourke asserted the need to enlarge the colony's dwindling of supply of labourers. The flourishing state of the economy of New South Wales, he declared, 'demands an increased supply of labour for its advantageous employment.'[34] He added that while measures were already in place to ensure the continuous immigration from Britain of 'useful labourers of various description', the supply was still 'so far below the demand'.[35] It was therefore necessary to look beyond the existing labour markets of Britain, and see if the procurement of the 'desired amount' of Indian labourers could solve the problem.[36] Bourke seemed to be thoroughly convinced that the Indian labourers would

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[30] Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Council of New South Wales, 1837, pp. 581-582.
[31] Ibid., p. 581. R.F. Doust, NSW Legislative Council 1824-1856: The Select Committee, (Sydney: NSW Parliamentary Library, 2005), p. 35
[32] Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Council of New South Wales, 1837, p. 585.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid., p. 557.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.

be the real solution to the colonies' labour problems. After all, he reasoned out, they had shown 'readiness to emigrate on reasonable terms', and had already proven their 'general utility' in other countries. [37]

But cost was probably what lured Bourke to Mackay's proposal in the first place. The procurement of Indian labourers was a lot cheaper compared to the government assisted immigration scheme. In Mackay's estimation Indian labourers could be obtained 'for less than eleven pounds sterling for every male' or 'eight pounds for every female' (a British immigrant could be obtained for no less than twice this amount).[38] The proposal, if implemented, could cut into half what the colonial government had already been spending just to bring in British immigrants to New South Wales. Besides, victualling the Indian labourers was more economical in the long run. Feeding them was cheap. Mackay informed the Select Committee that their staple food consisted only of 'maize flour' with 'a little salt, chillies, and vegetables'; that they were 'willing to partake of any kind of animal food, the worst description of which would be luxury to them'; that they ate 'but little rice, and eat snakes, lizards, rats, mice, &c,"; that the beef which the 'lowest European' had rejected would be 'very welcome to them'. [39] Putting a roof above their heads was just as economical. 'Their habitations,' Mackay observed, 'are equally simple and confined; any dry place twenty feet square and eight feet high, but suffice for twenty men. They were unacquainted with the luxury of a bed beyond a dry floor, upon which they repose in their blankets in the cold weather, and a remnant of thin cotton cloth in the summer season.'[40] Although work-wise, they were really nothing compared to the 'great muscular strength' of 'stout Europeans', their lower wages and rations were just enough to compensate for their physical liability. [41] Moreover, they were 'quiet, docile and industrious."[42] They were 'temperate', and were 'particularly trustworthy where sobriety is absolutely necessary.'[43] They were 'laborious', 'more tractable' and by far the most

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[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid., p. 581. For the cost of sending British emigrants to Australia, see "Lord Aberdeen to Bourke, 17 February 1835," Historical Records of Australia, Series 1, Volume 17, p. 667, and "Lord Glenelg to Bourke, 20 June 1835," Historical Records of Australia, Series 1, Volume 17, p. 739.
[39] Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Council, 1837, p. 582.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid., p. 583.
[43] Ibid., p. 584.

honest.[44] Most importantly, they learn and adapt fast. They could easily become an 'expert' in their craft 'after a short time'.[45]

The way Mackay portrayed the Indian labourers was curious. He was approving on the one hand and yet downright contemptuous on the other. He complimented the Indian labourers for their industry and superior skills, but in the same breath, he sweepingly denigrated their way of life. His patronising attitude could easily be blamed on his economic interest. As a capitalist, it was understandable that he would envisage anyone from the working class as an economic commodity. Besides, he had an ulterior motive in mind. He needed to convince the policy makers of the virtues of Indian labour, as well as the merits of obtaining them for Australia. Apparently Mackay thought it would be best to highlight the labourers' cheapness, even if it would entail insulting their lifestyle.

But there were other relevant reasons as well. Mackay's contempt of the Indian labourers could be blamed, for one, on the existing racial ideas of the period. Reynolds has already shown how the late-18th and early-19th centuries European belief in the 'Great Chain of Being'—a 'means of arranging all living matter in an ordered, hierarchical pattern beginning with the simplest creatures, ascending through the primates to man who was in turn overawed by the beings of the spirit world'—and other similar theories had reinforced among colonial Australians the idea that they were far more superior in comparison to all the other non-European peoples and cultures.[46] Arguably, these beliefs had informed Mackay's own view of the world, particularly, his own sense of superiority, as well as his own opinions concerning the backwardness of the Indians.

Mackay's personal experiences could also have influenced his judgement of the Indians. As a former planter and merchant in India, he surely had established some forms of contact and interaction with the Indians. These dealings had almost certainly shaped his own impressions of the country and its people. Mackay, however, was not just an ordinary planter and merchant. He was a British national, and a white man, who, in the colonial scheme of things, commanded high-status in the social, economic and political spheres. He embodied not just his own economic interest, but also the whole colonial interest of

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[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Reynolds, "Racial Thought in Early Colonial Australia," p. 47. See also Alan Lester, "Colonial Settlers and the Metropole: Racial Discourse in the Early 19th-century Cape Colony, Australia, and New Zealand," Landscape Research, 27/1 (2002), pp. 39-49.

Britain in India. He had that 'relative upper hand', the 'positional superiority', so to speak, over the colonised Indians.[47] This position of power, following Said's argumentation, could certainly have influenced the way he appraised the Indians. As Said explained:

> [N]o production of knowledge in the human sciences can ever ignore or disclaim its author's involvement as a human subject in his own circumstances, then it must be also true that for a European or American studying the Orient there can be no disclaiming the main circumstances of *his* actuality: that he comes up against the Orient as a European or American first, as an individual second. And to be a European or an American in such a situation is by no means an inert fact. It meant and means being aware, however, dimly, that one belongs to a power with definite interests in the Orient, and more important, that one belongs to a part of the earth with a definite history of involvement in the Orient almost since the time of Homer.[48]

Mackay's attitude towards the Indian labourers was, therefore, not just a simple matter of personal conviction or opinion. His attitude was, most importantly, shaped by his being British on the one hand, and of his colonial involvement in India, on the other. He could be rightly dismissed as an Orientalist. Everything that Said identified and condemned as Orientalist was present in his representations of the Indians: the strangeness, the difference, the backwardness, and so forth. His attitude was unmistakably Orientalist: his mixed feelings of derision and admiration of the Indians (e.g., Indians were honest, tractable, etc. but at the same time, pest to society), the way he bared his own belief in European superiority (e.g., great muscular strength of stout Europeans), and the manner he meticulously demarcated the differences between the Indian way of life with his own (e.g., long explanation concerning the Indian labourers' diet and way of life) clearly testified to his Orientalist predisposition.

The intensity of Mackay's Orientalist representation of the Indians could be well appreciated if it was read alongside G.F. Davidson's terse proposal to bring Chinese labourers into Australia, which was introduced at about the same time as the 1837 Select Committee on Immigration was discussing the merits of Indian labour.[49] Curiously, Davidson did not submit his proposal to the usual government channel. He instead

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[47] Said, Orientalism, p. 7.
[48] Ibid., p. 11.
[49] Sydney Herald, 12 June 1837 and Sydney Monitor, 19 June 1837. See also Alan Dwight, "Chinese Labourers to New South Wales," Eastern Horizon, 14/1 (1975), p. 52.

circumvented the entire bureaucratic process and went directly to the public. He laid out the proposal in the *Sydney Herald*, New South Wales' largest and the most widely read newspaper of the period.[50] Apparently, Davidson knew how to go about the whole business of obtaining Chinese labourers even without government assistance. He claimed to have a 'long experience in various parts of the eastern world', and seemed to know the right people who could ensure that the plan would come into fruition.[51] Forty employers were immediately sold to the plan.[52] They paid Davidson seven thousand pounds to cover the passage of six hundred Chinese male labourers.[53]

Compared to Mackay's, the tone of Davidson's proposal was curiously apathetic, almost sterile. The contemptuous images which Mackay had earlier assigned to the Indians were conspicuously absent in Davidson's characterisation of the Chinese. His proposal was remarkably straightforward. He thoroughly explained how the Chinese labourers could be obtained—from their places of origins, to their transit in Singapore, and into their final journey to Australia. He itemised every cost involved, and detailed how the labourers would be assigned and distributed equitably among the settlers. All throughout his explanations, however, Davidson never explained why the Chinese would make such good labourers and immigrants, except by saying that procuring them was way more economical than obtaining immigrants from far-away Britain. At the rate of just eleven pounds per head, he said, New South Wales could have 'any number' of 'industrious and hardworking' Chinese 'carpenters, cabinet makers, wheelwrights, millers, blacksmiths, bricklayers and makers, gardeners, cooks, growers of maize, sugar, and tobacco, and general labourers'.[54] Perhaps Davidson felt that no further explanation was necessary. After all, the good track record of Chinese labourers had already been proven in other British colonies and possessions.[55]

That Davidson spared the Chinese from contempt should not come as a surprise. In the first place, he conceived of the Chinese not as indentured labourers like what Mackay

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[50] Sydney Herald, 12 June 1837. R.B. Walker, The Newspaper Press in New South Wales, 1803-1920, (Sydney: Sydney University Press), pp. 48 and 56.
[51] Sydney Monitor, 19 June 1837.
[52] Dwight, "Chinese Labourers to New South Wales," p. 53.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid.
[55] See Victor Purcell , The Chinese in Southeast Asia, 2nd edition, (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 243-256.

had earlier planned with the Indians, but as free immigrants like many of his British compatriots. He explained: '[The] men would serve twelve months after their arrival, getting fed of course; and they would serve a second year for a pound per month, and rations. After the second year, they would expect wages, something nearly equal to what free Europeans get here.'[56] Besides, Davidson never had any colonial involvement with China, which could have prevented him from treating the Chinese as his inferior.

Indeed, no one in the whole Western world ever had any colonial involvement with China at that point. Since the late sixteenth century, the West had laid its covetous gaze on China but to avail. It sent its best missionaries, men of science, doctors, diplomats and soldiers who all but failed to gain that upper hand in China.[57] China remained closed and impenetrable. It was completely free from foreign contact and interference, except in a small port in the province of Canton (Guangdong) where western merchants were given the token, but tightly-regulated, trading privileges beginning 1760.[58] The Chinese emperor was very much in tight control of the situation until Britain's victory during the First Opium War (1839-1842). Western observers of China who were writing before this ominous war were well aware that the Chinese were not a subject people. Until the end of the 18th century, they regarded the Chinese as the equal of Europeans. Many would, in fact, readily identify the Chinese as 'white as the people in Europe' were white.[59] This perception slightly changed in the early 19th century as a result of the growing interaction with China. Several writers started to question the favourable assumptions about China and the Chinese.[60] But on the whole, the western image of the Chinese remained generally positive.

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[56] "Immigration of Chinese Labourers," Sydney Monitor, 19 June 1837. It is, therefore, wrong to identify Davidson's Chinese labourers as 'coolies', as historian Alan Dwight has done so in his works on the Chinese in New South Wales In the strictest sense of the word, 'coolie' means contract or indentured worker. Dwight, "Chinese Labourers to New South Wales," p. 52, and "Chinese in New South Wales Lawcourts, 1848-1854," Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society, 73/2 (October 1987), p. 75. See Pan, Sons of the Yellow Emperor, p. 45.

[57] See for example, Jonathan Spence, To Change China: Western Advisers in China, (New York: Penguin Books, 1980).

[58] Spence, Search for Modern China, pp. 120-121.

[59] Walter Demel, "Images of the Japanese and the Chinese in Early Modern Europe: Physical Characteristics, Customs and Skills," Itinerario, 25/4-4 (2001), p. 36.

[60] Jonathan Spence, "Western Perception of China from the Late Sixteenth Century to the Present," in Paul Roff, editor, Heritage of China: Contemporary Perspectives on Chinese Civilization, (Berkley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 5.

Orientalising the Chinese

The Western perception of the Chinese took complete a downturn by the middle of the 19th century.[61] The end of the Opium War exposed the vulnerability of the Chinese empire, and reduced the Chinese to a 'semi-colonial status'.[62] Observers immediately construed China's defeat as a mark of its inferiority as a nation. Jonathan Spence, the eminent historian of China, indicated that 1842 was a watershed in the Western perception of the Chinese. After 1842, he said, 'when the Chinese armies had been defeated by the British in the Opium War and the country opened to travel, trade, a Western military presence, and evangelization by both Protestant and Catholic missionaries in large numbers, the very obvious weakness of China bred contempt rather than admiration.'[63] The growing strength of Western Europe following the success of the Industrial Revolution further intensified the European sense of superiority. As Spence wrote:

> Whatever sincere admiration both Americans and Europeans had for Chinese decorations in the eighteenth century, the period of 'chinoiserie' when they eagerly bought Chinese furnishings, porcelain, wallpaper and silks, faded in the ebullient hard-driving world of the early industrial revolution and the railway age. The world of rococo faded in the glare of Victorian self-esteem.[64]

It would be wrong to conclude, however, that the attitude of the West towards the Chinese had always been favourable prior to 1842. In colonial Australia, hostile opinion of the Chinese emerged immediately after Davidson's plan to introduce Chinese labour saw print. For example, the *Sydney Monitor*, in expressing its objection against the plan, portrayed the Chinese as 'gross and sensual people, and addicted to a nameless vice'.[65] To facilitate their immigration, it warned, 'would be to pollute this land with crimes, which, with all its vices, New South Wales is at present free from.'[66] The *Monitor's* characterisation of the Chinese was not surprising. Its intention, after all, was to demolish anything good about Chinese labour. And in an age when strict Victorian moral standards were the norm, the most effective way to do this was to indict the Chinese for their alleged

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[61] Spence, Search for Modern China, p. 155.
[62] Immanuel Hsu, The Rise of Modern China, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 240.
[63] Spence, "Western Perception of China," p. 7
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.

immorality. But considering the *Monitor's* anti-establishment stance, one could perhaps argue that the adverse image it created of the Chinese was meant to denigrate the Chinese, and at the same time, dismiss and discredit the employers. [67]

A close reading of the *Monitor's* objection would also reveal that its main worry was not the Chinese *per se*. What really worried the *Monitor* was the perceived evil arising from the homosocial setup of the Australian colonies. [68] It explained that to introduce Chinese labour, which it correctly presumed to be exclusively male, would just aggravate the existing problem of having but a small population of women in the colonies. 'We cannot but deplore the present apparent disposition our Colonists, to introduce [Chinese] male emigrants without female,' it said, 'they have been accustomed to witness the evil in question in the introduction of five or six male convicts for one woman, and therefore have got into a sort of *habit* regarding it without distrust. Yet if they will reflect a moment, they must know that the evils of *convictism* have been sadly increased by this very circumstance.'[69] It issued this dire warning to employers and capitalists whom it accused of putting their economic interests above natural law and morality:

> The horror of deluging this Colony with adult males exclusive of females, is it seems to be reserved for the Colonists of New South Wales; who, so that they do but get their flocks tended and shorn, and their crops sown and harvested, seem not to be very nice about violating either the primeval command of the Deity, or the most powerful instinct of all animal nature, not to say, over human nature. The proposal, indeed, to introduce a mere single five hundred Chinese, is nothing. But it is the beginning of a most outrageous evil; it is the seed of a moral pestilence; it is the commencement of horrible confusion in our society, a razing of its foundations, a poisoning [of] the very fountains of physical and moral health.[70]

The *Monitor's* characterisation of the Chinese was not, however, peculiar to colonial Australia. In the early 19th century, Christian missionaries bombarded believers in the West with images of the alleged immoral practices being indulged by the Chinese, such as 'idolatry, infanticide, brutality, materialism and greed, as well as indifference

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[67] Walker, The Newspaper Press in New South Wales, p. 56.
[68] Homosociality was a big issue not just in colonial Australia. American prison administrators were also worrying about the immoralities arising from the prisons' homosocial environment since the beginning of the 19th century. See Regina Kunzel, "Situating Sex: Prison Sexual Culture in the Mid-Twentieth Century," GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies, 8/3 (2002), pp., 253-270.
[69] Sydney Monitor, 19 June 1837.
[70] Ibid.

towards the poor and starving', in order to gain support for their missionary activities in China.[71] In the 1830s, these missionaries used the issue of Chinese opium addiction to press European governments to hasten the opening, and more consequently, the conversion, of China.[72] They circulated grotesque images of Chinese opium addicts in order to win the sympathy and support of the faithful to their China project. Whether or not these images actually helped the missionaries achieve their goal was beyond the scope of this study. But it could certainly be argued that these images indeed reached a wide audience in the West, as perhaps the *Monitor's* judgement of the Chinese as being addicted to a nameless vice would indicate. The following portrait of a Chinese opium addict, which was circulating in Europe and probably in Australia during this period, had most likely been the inspiration behind this judgement:

> A pale and horribly emaciated expression deforms the faces of those who are in the grasp of the opium habit. Their senses are brutalised and eradicated, their memory becomes lost, leading to a greater stupidity; the entire complexion becomes livid, the eyes languid and the appetite greatly reduced, except for very sugary food; sleep is neither refreshing nor cooling, because these poor wretches can only long for the feeling of fire and dryness on their guts during times of quietness, which only the opium can produce. If no opium can be procured, all willpower disappears completely, water begins to flow out of eyes and nostrils, the body is trembling with cold, chest and head hurting from horrendous pain. Soon this is followed by diarrhoea and—if no opium is available—often death after a few days. Such is the nature of the opium habit that....not even the most minute amount of work can be done, families cannot be sustained and therefore nothing but misery and crime in consequence.[73]

The *Monitor* won the campaign against the plan to introduce Chinese labourers only by default. Davidson withdrew the plan himself after encountering a series of logistical problems.[74] He promptly returned the subscription money to the frustrated employers.[75] But even if Davidson did not withdraw the plan himself, the British

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[71] Frank Dikotter, Lars Laaman and Zhao Xun, Narcotic Culture: A History of Drugs in China, (London: Hurst and Company, 2004), p. 100.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Archives des Missions Etrangeres de Paris, "Kouy-tcheou: Question de l'Opium," Vol 549S, ff. 581-583, cited in ibid., p. 98.
[74] The problem mainly had something to do with difficulty of shipping coolies from Singapore to Australia. Sydney Herald, 30 April 1838 and Sydney Herald, 3 May 1839.
[75] Dwight, "Chinese Labourers to New South Wales," p. 53.

Government would surely block it anyway. This precisely was what it did to Mackay's Indian labour proposal. It junked the proposal on the grounds that Indian labourers

> would have a prejudicial effect both on the interest of the Colony and on British Emigration. Its tendency would probably be to the permanent creation in the colony of a distinct class of persons separated by origin and habits from the rest of the labouring Population, subject to restrictions not generally imposed, and regarded as an inferior and servile description. Such a system could scarcely fail to be injurious to the parties themselves, and, by bringing Agricultural Labour into disrepute, to discourage the immigration from this Country of Agricultural Labourers, who, as the advantages offered to them in New South Wales became more extensively known, may reasonably be expected to avail themselves in larger numbers than heretofore of the Opportunities of Emigration to that Country.[76]

Following the British Government's ban on the Indian labourers, the colonial government of New South Wales hastily withdrew its support for Mackay. Bourke, who just months earlier was extra supportive of the Indian labour proposal, changed his mind. He said that the proposal 'does not appear to me such as to encourage any prospect of advantage from the introduction of these Persons [i.e., Indian labourers] sufficient to compensate the expence [sic] and inconvenience. The attempt would I fear prove a sacrifice of permanent advantage to temporary expediency.'[77] Bourke's successor as governor of New South Wales, Sir George Gipps, echoed the same view. The proposal, he argued, was fraught 'with evils of the highest magnitude'.[78] He condemned Mackay and his supporters for looking after 'their immediate wants' than the 'ultimate good of the Country'.[79] In his report to London, Gipps vigorously denied that his predecessor's government had ever endorsed or supported the proposal:

> Without attempting to dispute the alleged facts of Mr. Mackay's having been induced in some degrees by these expectations to bring Natives of India...to New South Wales,

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[76] "Lord Glenelg to Sir George Gipps, 14 December 1837," Historical Records of Australia, Series 1, Volume 19, pp. 202-203. The British Government's decision to ground Mackay proposal added a new dimension to the discussion explored in the first chapter of this study on who exactly initiated the White Australia Policy, and when precisely it came about. The evidence at hand certainly did support historian Rupert Lockwood's argument that British Government was ultimately responsible for White Australia Policy. See Lockwood, "British Imperial Influences" pp. 23-33.

[77] 'Sir Richard Bourke to Lord Glenelg, 8 September 1837," Historical Records of Australia, Series 1, Volume 19, p. 83.

[78] "Sir George Gipps to Lord Glenelg, 1 May 1838," Historical Records of Australia, Series 1, Volume 19, p. 401.

[79] Ibid.

> I must remark to your Lordship that by no act of the Government were Bounties on them ever promised; and concurring as I entirely do with the sentiments expressed in Lordship's [opinion] on the subject of the proposed importation of Natives of India to this Colony, I cannot take on myself to advocate with your Lordship Mr. Mackay's claim to remuneration or bounty.[80]

The labour shortage crisis meanwhile worsened. The continuous infusion of British capital into Australia beginning 1830, and the abolition of transportation in 1840 aggravated the problem. The crisis was deeply felt in labour-intensive industries like mining. For example, the Australian Agricultural Company, the transnational conglomerate which monopolised the colonies' coal mining, actually needed 1,500 workers for one venture, but it was able to recruit only no more than 650 workers.[81] It later informed London that labour was 'fast decreasing, whilst the demand for Coal was as rapidly encreasing [sic]; that, in the Month of Septr., 1837, the number at work in the mines was 133, that, in December 1838, they were reduced to 109 and were still diminishing in number'.[82] Bourke himself acknowledged the crisis in a government report dated 1 May 1838. He said: 'So long as the demand for labour, created by the influx of Capitalists, continues at its present rate, the supply afforded by the means of [government-assisted] Immigration alone must I think be found deficient.'[83] But still, he did nothing to ease the problem.

The employers were visibly agitated with the way London and the colonial government of New South Wales handled the labour crisis. Not only were they unimpressed with the slow outcome of the government-assisted immigration scheme, they were also unhappy with the so-called 'moral quality' of the immigrants that were being sent from Britain through this scheme.[84] John Dunmore Lang, the outspoken Presbyterian cleric, complained that a 'large portion' of the female immigrants were of loose character

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[80] "Sir George Gipps, to Lord Glenelg, 22 August 1838," Historical Records of Australia, Series 1, Volume 19, p. 550.
[81] W.E.R. Wilson, "A History of the Australian Agricultural Company," typescript, no date.
[82] "Memorandum of Interview, Australian Agricultural Company, 9 January 1840," in Historical Records of Australia, Series 1, Volume 20, p. 480.
[83] "Sir George Gipps to Lord Glenelg, 1 May 1838," Historical Records of Australia, Series 1, Volume 19, p. 401.
[84] Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Council of New South Wales, 1835, pp. 409-410.

and therefore not suitable for the Australian colonies.[85] The *Sydney Morning Herald* sensed something more sinister. It opined that the immigration scheme was being abused by British Government to promote its own political and economic ends. The whole scheme, the editors said, 'has been converted into a contemptible tool for Whig faction purposes, and Popish ascendancy. The interests of the colony are thrown overboard to promote Irish poor laws. The sale of Land funds are handed over to agents who sweep the gaols and parishes of the cumberers of the property of popish landlords. The unhappy emigrants are shipped off, to make way for pardoned cut throats released from prison, by the popularity hunting Lord Lieutenant.'[86]

The labour crisis notwithstanding, the British Government maintained in its policy against the Indian and Chinese labour proposals.[87] The Australian employers were, however, undeterred. Beginning 1840, they undertook several initiatives to pressure Britain to permit the immigration of Indian and Chinese labourers to Australia. One of the earliest of such initiatives was made in February 1840 by George Richard Griffiths.[88] Griffith, using his influence as superintendent of the Bank of Australasia, petitioned directly to the Queen to relax the existing ban on Asian coolie immigration in order to ensure the economic welfare and future prospects of the Australian colonies. Captain Philip Parker King made a similar call in May of that same year in behalf of the Australian Agricultural Company.[89]

These new attempts to introduce Indian and Chinese labour into Australia should not in any way be construed as mere spin-offs of the earlier proposals of Mackay and Davidson. The historical context in which these initiatives emerged was different from the one that informed and shaped these two proposals. This was particularly true in the case of

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[85] Ibid., p. 268. See also Doust, New South Wales Legislative Council, 1824-1856: The Select Committees, p. 29 and R.B. Madgwick, Immigration into Eastern Australia, 1788-1851, (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1969), pp. 88-111.

[86] Sydney Morning Herald, 17 March 1840.

[87] "Marquess of Normanby to Sir George Gipps, 13 March 1839," Historical Records of Australia, Series 1, Volume 20, p. 64.

[88] "Lord John Russel to Sir George Gipps, 2 October 1840," Historical Records of Australia, Series 1, Volume 21, p. 7.

[89] Captain Philip King, "[Letter] To the Court of Directors of the Australian Agricultural Company, 5 May 1840," Australian Agricultural Company Despatches &tc. from NSW, Noel Butlin Archives Centre, 78/1/16, pp. 411-412. Se also S.H. Roberts, "History of the Contacts Between the Orient and Australia," in I. Clunies Ross, editors, Australia and the Far East: Diplomatic and Trade Relations, (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1935), p. 4.

the Chinese. It should be recalled that Davidson advanced the idea of Chinese labour when China was politically independent from the West. This time, however, the whole situation had changed. The once mighty Chinese empire was now in imminent danger of losing its sovereignty to Britain and other Western states. China was no longer that proud civilisation which the West had once admired and held in high regard. The Chinese was now being increasingly viewed by everyone in the Western world as backward, degenerate and derisive, to say the least.

These attempts to bring Chinese labour to Australia thus came at a critical juncture when the West was gaining positional superiority over China. These attempts came at a time when China was about to succumb to Western sphere of influence. This shift in China's political climate was evident in the way the proponents of these initiatives viewed and portrayed the Chinese. These initiatives no longer confused between Indian and Chinese labour. Indeed, from this point on, nationality no longer mattered as far as the Indians and the Chinese were concerned. The Indians and the Chinese were, in the eyes of these powerful employers, all Orientals, all cheap Asiatic coolie labourers. The evidence on Chinese labour which Captain King presented to the London directors of the Australian Agricultural Company poignantly showed how the Chinese came to be described in the same Orientalist terms as the Indians.[90] For example, in demonstrating the economic benefits of bringing Chinese labourer into Australia, King did not simply outline the cost involved; he also painstakingly detailed, like what Mackay did with the Indians, the coarse lifestyle which, he apparently believed, was indispensable to all Chinese.[91] 'The [Chinese] people,' he said, 'are accustomed to live on Rice, fish sometimes, a little pork, sweet potatoes and Tea which they drink without sugar. They all smoke tobacco...As to lodging, the Chinese labourers are accustomed in their own country to Brick Cottages where they stay closely together.'[92] His ambivalent caricature of the Chinese character was likewise

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[90] Captain Philip King, "[Letter] To the Court of Directors of the Australian Agricultural Company, 5 May 1840," pp. 417-420.

[91] King outlined the Chinese labourers' monthly schedule of wages thus: carpenters: first class, $15; second class, $12, third class $10; gardeners, bricklayers and masons: first class, $13, second class, $11, third class $9; agricultural labourers: $6 to $9. Their wages, King added, 'include everything: the parties providing [for] themselves, but as they have no idea of the present prices of the markets—it would probably be needed to increase these amounts in a Year of Drought. The emigrants would be engaged for more than 3 to 5 years and as one the main objects they have in view is to provide for their fathers and mothers—they would require an allowance before sailing—say of three or four months wages.' Ibid., pp. 417-418.

[92] Ibid., p. 418.

no different from Mackay's earlier portrayal of the Indians. He went through great lengths to praise the industrious and good-natured character of the Chinese, but in the end, he issued this caveat:

> In the treatment of the Chinese, good humour in one of the essential points. The contempt which they have for irascible and passionate masters is soon shown. The minute interference with their way of doing a thing, after they have had the object made clear to them should be avoided. They are keenly alive to ridicule and sensible of considerate treatment...[The Chinese] are proud people and possessed of a large stock of good sense, early trained to habits of order, temperate in their diet excepting when opium is within their reach and indefatigable in the pursuit of gain.[93]

Captain King's Orientalist characterisation of the Chinese labourers was significant as far as the history of colonial Australia's perception of the Chinese was concerned. It was arguably one of the first, if not, among the earliest manifestations of Orientalist discourse of the Chinese in colonial Australia. It clearly demonstrated the break in the attitude of colonial Australians towards the Chinese. Henceforth, the colonial Australians, like other Europeans, regarded the Chinese no longer with admiration, but with a strong sense of Orientalist difference and superiority.

[93] Ibid.

Chapter 4
Orientalist Discourse of the Chinese, Early 1840s to Early 1850s

The year 1840 marked an important turning point in the way the Chinese were viewed in colonial Australia. It marked the beginning when colonial Australians came to look at the Chinese in the same way as the Indians—with an Orientalist sense of difference and superiority. Gone by this time, of course, were the convicts' early images of China as a land of freedom and new hopes. Gone, too, was the Wakefieldian dream for Chinese settlers who would pioneer the development of the Australian continent. Now, the Chinese were increasingly viewed with contempt, resentment, and apprehension. They were seen and treated adversely both by those who wanted them as indentured workers, and by those who wanted them barred from Australia.

This chapter will locate the course of Orientalist discourse of the Chinese beginning 1840 until the landmark decision of the New South Wales Legislative Council to prohibit coolie trade in 1854. It will show the discursive transformations that took place during this period, as well as the events that ushered these transformations. It will also show the many different purposes in which this particular discourse were deployed. As in the previous chapter, this chapter will argue that the discourse of Orientalism was fundamentally responsible for fostering the colonial Australians' negative opinions of the Chinese.

The Early 1840s

The 1840s opened with the same labour problems that had beleaguered colonial Australia's economy during the past decade. This time, however, the problems had turned for the worse. The rapid influx of investments from Britain created a huge demand for labour, which the colonies' meagre population could not adequately supply. The Mother Country could not augment the colonies' dwindling labour supply either. Until this time, free emigration from Britain had not yet gained enough grounds. Prospective emigrants were said to have 'found the Colony still inadequately known'.[1] The convict labour which the colonies had relied on since 1788 was now out of the question. London had abruptly abolished the assignment system in 1839.

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[1] "Lord Russell to Sir George Gipps, 18 January 1840," Historical Records of Australia, Series 1, Volume 20, p. 504.

The employers—big and small alike—were seriously hit by these labour problems. Colonial Australia's biggest employer that time, the Australian Agricultural Company, alone suffered tremendously from this labour crisis. One of the company's reports noted that the scarcity of labour pushed the price of coal from £10 per ton in 1837 to £13 per ton in 1840.[2] The labour woes naturally alarmed the colonial government of New South Wales. In view of the ongoing problems, Governor Gipps, in early 1841, requested his London superiors to regulate the influx into the colonies of British Capital. He believed that a tight investment regulation could somehow reduce the pressures caused by the economy's insatiable demand for labour. 'An attentive consideration of the events,' he wrote 'had led me seriously to doubt whether the Capital may not be poured into a New Country too rapidly'.[3] He noted that the 'investment of in the Australian colonies of large sums of money by residents in England' had caused the economy more harm than good.[4] But Gipps' request came in too late. An economic depression loomed large towards the end of 1840 as a direct result of the 'excessive speculation', the 'discontinuance of Transportation', as well as the deficiencies in labour.[5]

The depression put a heavy toll on the colonies as economic activities came virtually to a standstill. Nearly everyone was affected. In the second quarter of 1841, even the New South Wales Government felt the pressure. It promptly asked Britain to suspend, for the time being, the assisted immigration scheme owing to the 'state of [the colonies'] finances'.[6] Gipps distressingly wrote: 'I am consequently induced to submit to Your Lordship that some measures are much wanted to regulate the supply of Emigrants, not so much to the demand which exists for them, as to our ability to pay for them.'[7] Neither did the economic depression spare the big conglomerates. The Australian Agricultural Company's coal production, for example, dwindled from 35,140 tons in 1842 to just about 23,272 tons in 1845.[8] But the worst affected were obviously the small employers who felt

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[2] Wilson, "A History of the Australian Agricultural Company," p. 17.
[3] "Sir George George Gipps to Lord John Russel, 1 February 1841," Historical Records of Australia, Series 1, Volume 21, p. 200.
[4] Ibid.
[5] "Sir George Gipps to Lord John Russell, 14 September 1841, Report on the General State of the Colony," Historical Records of Australia, Series 1, Volume 21, pp. 510-511.
[6] "Sir George Gipps to Lord John Russell, 13 September 1841," Historical Records of Australia, Series 1, Volume 21, p. 504.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Wilson, "A History of the Australian Agricultural Company," p. 17.

most of the brunt. For them, the lack of labour meant reduced production, and consequently, loss of income. But the depression spelled bankruptcy. As Gipps noted less than year after the depression set in: 'the pecuniary distress now existing' reduced 'many men to poverty, who but lately were esteemed rich'.[9]

Apparently, it was to save their economic livelihood from possible ruin that a group of small employers signed a petition in July 1841 imploring both the New South Wales Government and the British Government to permit the immigration of Indian and Chinese coolies to Australia.[10] This petition, it should be noted, came independently of the similar petitions filed by the Bank of Australasia and the Australian Agricultural Company the year before. This one was initiated by the local employers alone, without the backing of any powerful corporate entity, and was submitted not directly to London but through the colonial government of New South Wales.

Gipps informed the Colonial Office about this new initiative. He dutifully reminded the new Secretary for the War and the Colonies, Lord John Russell, of the existing government policy. He said: 'I long since reported to Lord Glenelg [Russell's predecessor] that my apprehension of the ultimate evils, which might result to the Colony from the importation of Coolies, was so great that I could never myself join in any application, tending to bring about such a measure; and I see no reason now to change the opinions I then expressed, though I must allow that the want of Labourers, and especially Shepherds in the Colony, is so great as to lead men hitherto opposed to the introduction of Collies now to it as the only measure by which, in their opinion, the production of the great staple commodity of the Colony, Wool, can be continued.[11] But even before Lord Russel could reply, the 1841 Select Committee on Immigration hurriedly pronounced its decision against the petition. It warned that the coolies, once introduced, could no longer be removed from the colonies.[12] It said that

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[9] "Sir George Gipps to Lord John Russell, 13 September 1841," Historical Records of Australia, Series 1, Volume 21, p. 506.

[10] "Sir George Gipps to Lord John Russell, 17 July 1841," Historical Records of Australia, Series 1, Volume 21, p. 435. See also "Sir George Gipps to Lord John Russell, 13 September 1841," Historical Records of Australia, Series 1, Volume 21, pp. 505-506.

[11] "Sir George Gipps to Lord John Russell, 17 July 1841," Historical Records of Australia, Series 1, Volume 21, p. 435.

[12] "Sir George Gipps to Lord John Russell, 17 July 1841," Historical Records of Australia, Series 1, Volume 21, p. 435 and W.G. Australia, "Report of the Select Committee on Immigration, 27 July 1841," Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Council of New South Wales, 1841, pp. 4-5.

> any system for ensuring the removal of the coolies from the colony, after the expiration of a limited service [was] impracticable, and hopeless...In reality [these coolies] have arrived at a conviction, that if this race of people were to be once introduced and extensively employed, their removal could not be effected in opposition to their own feelings of interest, and the influence of proprietors unwilling to dispense with the services of dependants to whom they become habituated. *To treat this measure fairly, therefore, it must be viewed in connection with its certain consequence of establishing here in perpetuity a race of different origin, colour, and habits from the European, and necessarily doomed to occupy a station of inferiority* [emphasis mine].[13]

The belief that the Indians and the Chinese were from a race of distinct and inferior origin, colour and habits from the Europeans was, no doubt, determined by prevailing racial ideas of the period. Students of Australian history have already pointed this out in a plethora of studies surveyed in the first chapter of this thesis. But it would be just as reasonable to say that this belief was based not solely on the ideas of race alone, but also on the existing Orientalist knowledge of the Indians and the Chinese. This particular knowledge, as shown in previous examples, had similarly reinforced the notion that the Indians and the Chinese were different, and that they were the inferior of colonial Australians.

At any rate, despite the colonial government's strong opposition, the clamour for coolie immigration did not die down. As soon as the news of British victory in the Opium War was confirmed in 1842, William Charles Wentworth, a wealthy and politically influential landowner, organised a lobby group called the Coolies Association to demand the procurement of 'Asiatic labour-reserves' to Australia.[14] The association had a large membership, and presumably, also enjoyed a strong following at least from the affluent members of colonial Australian society. In Governor Gipps' estimation, the association had 686 members, 'including a very large proportion of the proprietors of Land and Stock in the Colony and 104 magistrates, out of the total number of 365' magistrates in the colony during that period.[15] The association outlined its objectives in its 25 May 1843 memorial

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[13] Australia, "Report of the Select Committee on Immigration, 27 July 1841," p. 4.
[14] Roberts, "History of the Contacts Between the Orient and Australia," p. 5.
[15] "Sir George Gipps to Lord Stanley, 5 May 1843," Historical Records of Australia, Series 1, Volume 22, p. 702.

addressed to the British Government.[16] According to the memorial, the introduction of coolies was paramount to the economic wellbeing of the colonies: it would alleviate the pressure caused by the scarcity of labour, and at the same time, reduce the high rate of wages.

To argue its case, the Coolie Association vigorously belied the criticism that the employment of coolies could 'interfere with the Europeans engaged in other branches of industry'.[17] It assured the critics that the coolies would be assigned only in occupations which the Europeans had shied away from, such as 'Shepherding'.[18] It insistently demonstrated the suitability of the Indian and Chinese labourers to the needs, as well as the circumstances, of the colonies. It rehearsed the earlier Orientalist images of the Indians and the Chinese as tractable and docile workers, and claimed that only them who could take up the pastoral and agricultural occupations that were being required by the employers. Compared to the Europeans whose temperament and physical constitution were 'generally averse to pastoral pursuits', it said that the Indians and the Chinese were perfectly suited to work on such occupations considering their honest, sober and thrifty nature, and not to mention, the hard life they were accustomed to in their own countries.[19] Thus, in a true Orientalist fashion, the demarcation between white Australian workers and the servile Indian and Chinese labourers was clearly marked.

The Coolie Association thought that the plan to bring coolies to Australia would be a good opportunity to extend and showcase British benevolence to the unfortunate quarters of the world. It said that bringing the Indians and the Chinese to Australia would communicate to them 'the habits of civilised life, and by the removal of prejudices [of their own cultures], render them more accessible to influence and adoption of Christian principles.'[20] It would also alleviate their poverty:

> Memorialists trust that your Lordship, in conceding the object of their prayer, will perceive that the interest of humanity and the welfare of the Colony would be alike consulted. It is well known that the race[s], which Memorialists are desirous to import, are frequently exposed to the most painful privations in their own Country, that the

[16] Ibid., pp. 702-706.
[17] Ibid., p. 703.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid., p. 704.

> famine itself is not an unusual occurrence amongst them. Their removal to this Colony, which possesses a climate congenial to [their] constitution, and where the reward of Labour is so much superior to that afforded in their own Country as to enable them to return to India at the expiration of their contracts, with a competence to them sufficient for life, would therefore not only promote their present relief but also secure their future and permanent interests.

The association's concern for the welfare of Indians and the Chinese was understandable. It was characteristic of the period's humanitarian agenda. Humanitarianism was on the rise in Britain since the beginning of the 19th century, and gained even more popular currency during the debate leading to emancipation in 1834.[21] It created strong awareness of the conditions of the 'distant peoples' who were moored in paganism, barbarism and poverty, and fired the desire to civilise and spread 'progress spiritually and materially'.[22] This seemingly compassionate concern for the Indians and the Chinese, as Said already showed elsewhere, was also typical of the period's discourse of Orientalism.[23] It gave credence to the Orientalist assumptions about the superiority of West and inherent inferiority of the so-called Orientals. It affirmed the palpable divide between the West as the civilised and the Orient as wanting to be civilised. It also provided the intellectual and moral justification for colonialism. It justified the subjugation of the so-called subject peoples, to the occupation of their lands, to 'their internal affairs rigidly controlled, [to] their blood and treasure put at the disposal of one or another Western power.'[24]

The Coolie Association cited the Mauritian precedent to pursue its case further. The British Government, it should be remembered, permitted the colonial government of Mauritius to subsidize the procurement of Chinese labourers from Singapore in 1841.[25] In early 1842, it again allowed Mauritius to bring in Indian Coolies from Dhangar. The association was demanding from London to grant the same privileges to New South Wales. Its carefully worded plea said: '[The] Memorialists are most desirous of being permitted to participate in the advantages of a similar measure; and they feel confident that, whilst your Lordship and Her Majesty's Government have thought proper to acquiesce in a plan

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[21] Lester, "Colonial Settlers and the Metropole," p. 40.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Said, Orientalism, p. 31-49.
[24] Ibid., p. 36.
[25] Dwight, "Chinese Labourers to New South Wales," p. 53.

deemed necessary for the welfare of another Colony, your Lordship will, with that spirit of impartiality and justice ever characterised your Lordship's Administration, not hesitate to grant a like concession equally indispensable to the Welfare of New South Wales.'[26]

But then the Mother Country had a different plan for its Australian colonies. It did not intend Australia to become another big colonial plantation like the Mauritius. By this time, Britain envisaged Australia no longer as a receptacle for the country's hardened criminals, but as a thriving settlement for the kingdom's excess population. Thus, it hardened its policy against the introduction of Indian and Chinese coolie labour notwithstanding the persistent clamour from the Australian employers themselves.[27] It reiterated its earlier position on the issue: that the presence of Indian and Chinese labourers would have an adverse impact on the Indians and the Chinese themselves, on the British labourers, and most importantly, on the prospects of the colonies in general. As Lord John Russell, Britain's colonial secretary, clarified: 'Independently of the hazards to the [Indian and the Chinese] people themselves, and of the difficulties connected with the voyage...We apprehend that there would be much danger in the plan [to bring Indian and Chinese labourers] to the tone of activity and enterprise which has hitherto so eminently characterise this colony. It would exceedingly likely to degrade the standard of labour.'[28]

Ironically, the public's opinion on the coolie labour issue was not as decisive as the British Government's policy. The sector representing employers' interest was clearly in favour of coolie immigration, while the workers, for obvious reasons, were against the idea altogether. But there were also those who vacillated from being a vocal critic to a staunch supporter of coolie immigration. The *Australian*, one of the most popular newspapers of the period, was a case in point. The *Australasian Chronicle* reported in September 1842 that:

> We have been accustomed for some time past to see periodical revolutions of political sentiment in the columns of the *Australian*. Hence it excites little surprise in us to see our contemporary informing his readers, with all the awkwardness of recantation, that he is about to withdraw all his objections to the introduction of Coolies, and further, that he is about to "express himself favourable to the object aimed at by those who are

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[26] "Sir George Gipps to Lord Stanley, 5 May 1843," Historical Records of Australia, Series 1, Volume 22, p. 703.
[27] "Lord John Russell to Sir George Gipps, 2 October 1840," Historical Records of Australia, Series 1, Volume 21, pp. 6-8.
[28] Ibid., p. 7.

about to petition the legislature on the subject." The *Herald* [a pro-employers and by extension a pro-Coolie labour newspaper] and the *Australian* will henceforth enjoy the inglorious rivalry in the affection of "birds of passage," and other fortune seekers, and of some colonists perhaps, who look more to their immediate gains and losses than to the permanent interests of the colony. [29]

According to the *Chronicle*, what influenced the *Australian* to abandon its earlier stand against coolie immigration were the 'withdrawal of the prohibitory order' by British Government in the case of Mauritius and 'the necessity of the case', that is to say, the scarcity of labour.[30] 'Now,' the *Chronicle* added, 'the *Australian* sees "no reason why the British government would not be as willing to sanction the immigration of Coolies to New South Wales as it would to Mauritius."'[31] Not surprisingly, the *Australian's* indecisiveness was put into good use by its rival in the newspaper business. The *Chronicle*, for example, took this golden opportunity to demean and vilify the *Australian*. It remarked: '[W]e cannot allow the weathercock policy of a former opponent of Coolie immigration, in connexion with this movement, to pass unnoticed, lest it might be supposed from our silence that we, too, were wavering in our opinions, or that we were unprepared in case of necessity to maintain the superiority of European blood for colonising this colony, and preserving free institution therein, and to assert the rights and privileges of British immigrants who have arrived or are about to arrive in our shores.'[3233]

The *Chronicle's* quarrel with the *Australian*, however, was more than just a petty media rivalry. Judging from the tone of its arguments, the *Chronicle* was clearly engaging in class politics. The *Chronicle* wanted to endear itself to its working class readers at the expense, unfortunately, of the *Australian* whom it accused of coopting with the employers. It denied that there was still a shortage of labour: many of the Australian workers were in fact 'offering their services at any price, and some few [were] said to be starving for want.'[34] Hence, it alleged that the *Australian's* support for coolie immigration was part and

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[29] The Australasian Chronicle, 1 September 1842 and The Colonial Observer, 3 September 1842
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.
[32] The Australasian Chronicle, 1 September 1842.
[33] Dwight, "Chinese Labourers to New South Wales," p. 53.
[34] The Australasian Chronicle, 1 September 1842.

parcel of the devious ploy by employers to 'undersell the [European workers] in the labour market'.[35]

The *Chronicle* was probably correct in asserting that there was no longer a shortage of labour in the Australian colonies. The Select Committee on Immigration said so in 1842. The Bounty System, it remarked, 'met the demand for labour effectually and economically'.[36] Another government report in May 1842 indicated that there were actually a 'considerable' number of unemployed immigrants in Sydney and Port Phillip.[37] In Melbourne, it was reported that hundreds of 'Male Immigrants, not able to make better engagements, are still employed by Government', and that there were about two hundred and fifty unemployed women and their children receiving unemployment assistance from the government.[38] Governor Gipps corroborated these reports in September 1842. He said: '[T]here is not, it appears to me, any actual dearth of Labour in the Colony; but there is ground to apprehend that ere long a scarcity of it will again be felt.'[39] There were also good reasons to believe in the *Chronicle's* allegation that the clamour for coolie immigration was just part of the ploy to undercut the wages of the Australian workers. Before the 1840 economic depression, the minimum weekly wage in the colonies was 20s.[40] At the height of the depression, this dropped to just about 18s.[41] The introduction of coolies could, almost certainly, pull the wages further down.

Other newspapers shared the *Chronicle's* views. The *Colonial Observer*, for example, expressed similar concern that presence of coolies in the colonies could jeopardise the job prospects of the Australian workers.[42] It warned: 'Let us not add insult to injury, by mocking the privations of our fellow countrymen by a proposal to bring to labour of a degraded race into competition with theirs in a market already overstocked.'[43] It

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[35] Ibid.
[36] Doust, NSW Legislative Council 1824-1856: The Select Committee, p. 75.
[37] "Sir George Gipps to Lord Stanley, 23 May 1842,' Historical Records of Australia, Series 1, Volume 23, p. 67.
[38] Ibid.
[39] "Sir George Gipps to Lord Stanley, 20 September 1842," Historical Records of Australia, Series 1, Volume 23, p. 290.
[40] Sir George Gipps to Lord Stanley, 23 May 1842,' Historical Records of Australia, Series 1, Volume 23, p. 67.
[41] Ibid.
[42] The Colonial Observer, 3 September 1842
[43] Ibid.

decried the selfish employers for sacrificing the public good for the benefit of their own economic interest. It denounced their shameless hypocrisy, saying:

> An attempt has also been made to make [the introduction of coolies] a work of philanthropy. How very becoming in these gentlemen who witness the distress of their countrymen with callous difference! Talk of benevolence, forsooth—talk of improving the condition of the despised Coolies! Charity begins at home, and while we see the total absence of sympathy with the difficulties of the poor immigrant population, we are not be gulled with professions of philanthropy and a desire to ameliorate the condition of a semi-barbarous race, while the true, the only motive, is the difference of cost to the employer of labour between the services of the Coolie and that of the European. If a desire to extend the blessings of civilization and to improve the physical condition of an abject and degraded race [of the Indian and Chinese coolies] had any place in the breast of these men, what a fine field would be afforded for the exercise of a kindred feeling in initiating the Aborigines of our territory in the arts of civilization and the pursuits of peaceful and productive industry! And where could a more valuable auxiliary be found to the civilised Europeans, in his inroads on the wilderness, than the original children of the soil?'[44]

Interestingly, while the *Observer* considered the Indians, the Chinese and the Aborigines as degraded people, it did not treat them equally on the same level. The Indians and the Chinese were, on the one hand, seen invariably as coolies, cheap labour and even 'semi-barbarians'. The Aborigines, on the other hand, were seen as the 'noble savage', the 'original children of the soil'.[45] Thus, the *Observer's* sympathetic concern for the plight of the Aborigines was never translated to the Indians and the Chinese. They were, on the contrary, resented completely. They were seen as a threat, rather than as a deserving recipient of Western beneficence. In the words of the *Observer*:

> In a social point of view...[the] introduction of a semibarbarous [sic] race would be productive of the most injurious consequence. It would lower the tone of morality, encourage sentiments, and dispositions, and habits on the part of the European, hostile to liberty and to social advancement. The existence of a superior and an inferior race under the same social institution has uniformly had the effect of nourishing the spirit of despotism in the one, and that of abject servility in the other; and where a spirit of

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[44] Ibid

[45] Ibid., See Ann McGrath, "Modern Stone Age Slavery: Images of Aboriginal Labour and Sexuality," Labour History, 69 (November 1995), pp. 33-34.

> despotism is nourished by the very constitution of society we have no guarantee that the spirit will be permanently restrained within the limits originally assigned to it. Sloth and intellectual imbecility are evils in the social system which such a state of things has also unfirmly cherished and unfirmly will.[46]

That the Indians and the Chinese were seen as a social menace should not come as a surprise. The discourse of Orientalism, as Said uncovered, has consistently viewed the Orient and the Orientals with threat and suspicion. The Orient was that 'malignant, dark and threatening' land. The Orientals were, by extension, those vicious, ominous and sinister peoples.[47] As one scholar paraphrased Said: 'In the European imagination Asia came to stand for something both distant and unknown yet also to be feared. As the colonizing power came to identify themselves with reason, order and power, so the colonized East became perceived as chaotic, irrational and weak. In psychological terms, the East became a cipher for Western unconscious, the repository of all that is dark, unacknowledged, feminine, sensual, repressed and liable to eruption.'[48]

The most forceful objection to the coolie labour proposal, however, came neither from the government nor from the press, but from the Australian settlers themselves. This came in March 1842, in the form of a manifesto imploring Queen Victoria to censure any action that would bring coolies to Australia.[49] The manifesto, signed by 4,129 persons, 'principally of the Working Classes in Sydney', was probably the first and largest mass-based anti-Indian/Chinese action before the gold rush period.[50] The issues which the manifesto raised were not entirely new, however. It merely rehashed the old, perennial arguments that the introduction of coolies could 'lower the present low rate of wages', hamper the colonies' living standards, and 'hinder the growth of virtue and morality' among the settlers.[51]

Although the manifesto offered no new argument as to why coolie immigration should be prevented at all cost, it vividly expressed a hitherto unarticulated fear: that is, the fear that the presence of the Indians and the Chinese, degraded peoples as they were, could

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[46] The Colonial Observer, 3 September 1842.
[47] Harry Oldmeadow, "Debating Orientalism," Australian Religion Studies Review, 18/2 (November 2005), p. 135.
[48] Ibid.
[49] "Sir George Gipps to Lord Stanley, 27 March 1848," Historical Records of Australia, Series 1, Volume 22, pp. 594-596.
[50] Ibid., p. 594.
[51] Ibid.

revive the old slave-like patterns of life in the now defunct Botany Bay penal settlement. As the manifesto said: 'Your Petitioners would also suggest that, in consequence of the length of time which this country has been a penal settlement and of the habits in many cases formed by those who have been masters of assigned Servants, there is every reason to believe that the employment of Coolies would from the first assume or rapidly degenerate into the form of slavery.'[52] It is beyond the scope of this thesis to conform or deny the validity of this fear. It is, however, important to remember that: first, this fear had its origins in the country's convict past; and second, this fear was an important factor which motivated these 4,129 Sydney workers to resist the Chinese.

The traumatic memory of transportation was still fresh in the hearts and minds of many colonial Australians.[53] And so was the social stigma associated with convictism.[54] Australia's convict past, as historian John Hirst said, did not wear off as easily as the abolition of transportation.[55] Up until the middle of the 19th century, 'the world still remembered the convicts' despite the large scale free migration and the anti-transportation movement.[56] It did not easily forget Australia's beginnings as a 'Den of Thieves'.[57] It thought that Australia's 'convict stain' was 'part of the people's physical inheritance and not to be set aside by a symbolic gesture like the transportation movement.'[58] An 1838 article from the *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal*, for example, said that:

> It has not been thought necessary in these articles to say anything of the History of New South Wales. Everybody is aware that the colony was founded (1788) for the reception of convicted criminals from Britain, and that, under the domination of a governor and a council, it remains a penal settlement till the present day. How one of the finest countries in the world should have been so long devoted to this purpose, it would be out of place here to inquire; it is enough that attention is called to the fact.[59]

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[52] Ibid., p. 595.
[53] Robert Hughes, The Fatal Shore, (London: Collins Harvill, 1987).
[54] John Hirst, Convict Society and Its Enemies: A History of Early New South Wales, (London: Allen and Unwin, 1983). See especially chapter 4, aptly titled "The Shame of Botany Bay". See John Hirst, "Australia's Absurd History," Quadrant, 35/3 (March 1991): 20-27.
[55] Ibid., p. 217.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid., p. 189.
[58] Ibid., p. 217.
[59] "Emigration to New South Wales: Convict System – Free Settlers," Chambers' Edinburgh Journal, 7 (1838), p. 142 in Judith Johnston and Monica Anderson, editors, Australia Imagined: Views from the British Periodical Press, (University of Western Australia Press, 2005), p. 25.

Hence, the post-transportation colonial Australians, always insecure of their and their country's reputation, were wary of anything that could remind people of their convict heritage. They were desperate to prove that convict days were really over, that the 'convicts had not bred much' and that Australia was a whole new different world now.[60] They worked so hard to conceal, if not, totally outgrow, this shameful past. Hence, the Sydney workers forcefully raised their objection as soon as the calls to introduce Indian and Chinese coolies were made. These coolies apparently reminded them of the convicts. They were both regarded as degraded peoples: the convicts by virtue of their crimes, and the Indians and the Chinese by virtue of their race. They were both bound: the convicts to their sentence, and the coolies to their contracts. They never really owned their freedom and liberty. They were both servile: they toil not for their own sake but for someone else's. Just like the presence of convicts, these workers therefore believed that the presence of the Indians and Chinese could do further damage to the already bad reputation of Australia.

By the mid-1840s, colonial Australia's Orientalist representations of the Chinese became more complex. Arguably, the hitherto unresolved issue of coolie immigration was responsible for this new development. In order to convince the government and the public of the necessity of coolie labour, the frustrated employers and their supporters conjured a whole range of different Orientalist images of the Chinese. They Orientalised the Chinese not just to show that they were cheap and hardworking labourers, but also to show that they were perfectly suited to the rigours of the work, as well as the climate and environment of Australia. Incidentally, the anti-coolies lobby did the same. It Orientalised the Chinese to show their undesirability and unsuitability to the labour economy of Australia.

The Mid-1840s to the Early 1850s

The mid-1840s witnessed an important redefinition of the term 'coolie'. It should be recalled that the term was used initially to refer only to the Indians, specifically to the Dhangars and the so-called 'Hill Coolies of Bengal'.[61] The Chinese were appended to the term at the height of the debates on the immigration of Indian and Chinese workers in the early 1840s. The word 'coolie' was then put into wide circulation thereafter. Beginning

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[60] Ibid. See John Hirst, "Australia's Absurd History," Quadrant, 35/3 (March 1991): 20-27.
[61] Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Council of New South Wales, 1837, pp. 582-583.

1845, the Indians came to be increasingly sidelined from the definition. 'Coolie' came to refer just to the Chinese.

The sidelining of the Indians from the usage of the word 'coolie' was unclear. But it should at least be pointed out that British laws that time prohibited the engagement of Indian natives as 'outdoor labourers' in any British colonies, territories, possessions or dominions.[62] Thus, when the colonists brought 86 Indians to Australia in 1844, they employed them as 'domestic servants', and not as coolies.[63] Furthermore, there was growing uneasiness among the employers concerning the suitability of the Indian labourers for Australia. The issue of working habits, caste, religion and even diet, worried the proponents of the Indian labour proposal early on. A strong supporter of the proposal, J.R. Mayo, for instance, noted with apprehension that the "Natives of India cannot, in their own country, be induced to forego their customs and manners, the use of their own implements of husbandry and their own modes of agriculture, nor can they be stimulated to exert a continuous labour...[they also] require certain kinds of food, certain forms of cooking, and other observances. Of several castes, in the same gang, one will not eat with the other, nor allow their food to be cooked by any other one of their own caste.[64] In 1844, Jenner Plomley, an English immigrant in Sydney, further questioned whether indeed the Indians would make good workers for Australia.[65] He said that the Chinese 'are undoubtedly superior to the natives of India.'[66] The Chinese, he added 'are a hardier and more industrious race, endowed with a more robust constitution—better able to endure fatigue, and to withstand vicissitudes of climate, and superior to the Indian labourers as agriculturists. Moreover, they are more likely to become permanent residents on the soil, and the hope of their conversion to Christianity under more favourable auspices than obtain in their own country, is anything but chimerical.'[67]

Beginning mid-1840s, colonial Australia's knowledge of the Chinese also acquired more depth as the thriving colonial presses featured regular stories about the Chinese. A

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[62] "Report of the Select Committee on Asiatic Labour, 27 November 1854," in Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Council of New South Wales, 1854, Volume 2, p. 3.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Council of New South Wales, 1837, p. 583.
[65] Jenner Plomley, "Chinese Immigration," Simmond's Colonial Magazine and Foreign Miscellany, 3 (1844): 41-42 in Johnston and Anderson, editors, Australia Imagined, pp. 183-184.
[66] Ibid., p. 183.
[67] Ibid.

Sydney-based periodical, *The Atlas*, for example, informed its readers about the distinct cultural practices of the Chinese. It described a Chinese marriage ceremony thus: the brides 'bring no portion with them, but are rather bought by the husband of their parents and relations. The bridegroom most commonly sees his bride for the first time upon her being brought to his house from the place of nuptial ceremony; for in the temple where it is performed she is covered over with a veil which reaches from the head to the feet.'[68] It also instructed the readers about Chinese poetry and music, which, it said, although grand in 'style and imagery, loftiness and cadence...[are] not easily understood or relished by Europeans'.[69]

It was, however, the perennial issue of coolie immigration which constantly kept the colonial Australians updated about the Chinese. The issue inadvertently put the Chinese on the limelight. The intense debates and discussions made them more familiar to the colonial Australians. For example, Plomely's defence of Chinese immigration, which appeared in the British journal *Colonial Magazine and Foreign Miscellany*, contained not just the usual Orientalist clichés about the Chinese (e.g., that they ate 'principally rice and fish, with occasionally a little meat'), but also detailed information concerning the thriving Chinese communities in Asia and the Pacific.[70] It pointed out that

> Next to the English, perhaps the Chinese, of all the nations of the earth, are most disposed to emigrate...It has been computed that upwards of fifty thousand adults, chiefly males, annually emigrate from shores of China to seek a home and livelihood in foreign land. These emigrants have found their way in great numbers, and at their own expense, to Siam, Borneo, the Philippine Islands, Moluccas, Java Singapore, Malacca, Pinang [sic], Madras, Calcutta, Bombay, Mauritius and to the Islands of Bally [sic] and Lombock [sic]...In Singapore they form the bulk of the labouring population, and are, with few exceptions, the only clearers and cultivators of the soil. In Borneo, in the very teeth of its hostile inhabitants, they have form flourishing settlements. At Batavia, they form a large and industrious portion of the population; the same at Manilla [sic]. Thousands exist under British rule at Hong Kong, where all the public and private works are carried on by them.[71]

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[68] The Atlas, 27 March 1847.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Plomley, "Chinese Immigration," p. 184.
[71] The Atlas, 27 March 1847.

Adam Bogue's pro-coolie propaganda article in the *Atlas* is another example. Like Plomely's article, Bogue's article did not just simply outline the benefits of coolie labour for Australia; it also provided readers with an insightful eyewitness account of how it was to be a white man in post-Opium War China. Bogue recalled:

> During my stay in China, I paid a visit to Amoy, the principal seaport of the Fookeen [sic] Province, and one of the cities opened to our [i.e., British] commerce by the late treaty. The dense population of the city and the surrounding district, the great poverty of the majority of the inhabitants, their civility and kindness to Europeans, their general and inoffensive manners, the tractability of their character, and their indomitable industry in agricultural and other pursuits, induced me to suppose that it would be of the first advantage to New South Wales in her present condition, if she could be supplied with labourers from that province.[72]

The perennial issue of coolie immigration also perpetuated most of the early 1840s Orientalist caricatures of the Chinese, as Bogue's aforementioned article clearly showed. In the late 1840s, however, these Orientalist images had antagonised, rather than endeared the Chinese to the colonial Australians. Even the most ardent supporters of coolie immigration surprisingly felt this antagonism towards the Chinese. One article from the *Atlas* was purportedly an apology for Chinese coolie immigration.[73] But its judgement of the Chinese was no different from the advocates of anti-coolie immigration. It initially claimed that the abolition of transportation and the suspension of government-assisted immigration from Britain created a huge problem in the supply of labour. It said that not unless these two schemes were revived in the soonest possible time, 'we [the colonial Australians] must have recourse to the people of the Celestial. We must seek at Amoy and Hong Kong that assistance for the development of our resources…'[74] The Chinese, after all, 'are to be found arms and sinews enough to supply our wants for ages to come'.[75] Moreover, they were 'temperate' and 'industrious', and 'would have no objection to immigrate into this colony in thousands, and at a rate of remuneration far below anything that European labour could be reduced to the most extended competition.'[76]

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[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid.

Despite its clear want of Chinese labour, the article contradicted itself by issuing a strong warning about the potential danger that the Chinese could bring to Australia. If given a better choice (that is, revival of transportation and assisted immigration), it said, it would not push for Chinese immigration. 'We are not partial to admixture of any admixture races,' it confessed, 'particularly such an admixture as the Chinese and the Anglo-Saxon—the one very different from, and so vastly inferior to the other....We have no desire to see the dusky population of China, mingle in our streets with the fair complexion of the Anglo-Saxon—or the temples of Budh [sic] rise side by side with the Christian's house of prayer. We have no wish to see the habits and customs of paganism brought into immediate contact with those of Christianity.'[77] It reiterated that it would rather have the convicts, 'with all their anticipated pollution, a thousand times over', than to have the Chinese. At least the convicts, '[h]owever greatly debased...have a national character which vice and crime cannot divest from them—and which, in spite of themselves, they must transmit to their posterity—a character which alone places them far before all the pagan communities in the universe.'[78]

The Orientalist discourse of the Chinese also became more intense in the late 1840s. The new information about China and the Chinese appeared to have directly caused this new development. As the Chinese became more familiar, the more virulent the discourse of Orientalism turned up to be. By this time, colonial Australia's Orientalist discourse of the Chinese had conformed, more or less, to the general discourse of Orientalism in the West. The Chinese came to be increasingly seen in the same way as the rest of Western world imagined the Orient during the nineteenth century—despotic, unreliable, aberrant, anomalous, and backward.[79] This was best demonstrated by an article on the Chinese by the *Sydney Guardian*, a journal which dubbed itself as 'vehicle of information on religious, literary and scientific subjects, and particularly on events of interest and importance with the Church [of England and Ireland]'.[80]

The said article opened with the characteristic Orientalist ambivalence. The Chinese, it said, are 'so full of contradictions that one can scarcely believe in so many virtues and

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[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Said, Orientalism
[80] Sydney Guardian, 1 June 1848. The Sydney Guardian was published under the superintendence of the clergymen of United Church of England and Ireland. It ran from 1 June 1848 to 1 February 1850.

vices should be incorporated in one and the same individual.'[81] It described them as 'industrious and fawning, proud, mendacious and covetous'.[82] It praised them as 'a great people, though as yet unconscious of their power'.[83] Their 'national virtues,' it added 'are numerous': 'When we look at their perseverance, their assiduity, their child-like love, their spirit of content and their friendly demeanour, we must acknowledge them deserving of commendation'.[84] These virtues, however, are negated by what it believed as the vicious traits inherent among all Chinese, such as 'mendaciousness, deceit, roguery, thievish propensities, utter want of feeling and disputatious spirits.'[85] It concluded: 'we may well shudder, and feel disgusted at the profligacy and flint-heartedness of this people.[86]

The whole point of demonstrating these virtues and vices in one and the same breath was not simply to discredit the Chinese. This was done, more importantly, to show that the Chinese could not be trusted, that always lurking beneath their docile demeanour was their deceptive nature. The treatise criticised other observers for failing to recognise this. Their ignorance had misled them, as well as other people, into believing that the Chinese were indeed trustworthy. It remarked: 'They who confine themselves to the light...side of the portrait, draw false lineaments, and inevitably fail in exhibiting an accurate portrait of their real character.'[87] It warned readers not to fall into the same trap as these ill-informed observers. It urged them to be cautious, and advised them to take any favourable statement about the Chinese with a grain of salt. Wrong impressions about the Chinese abound, which even the Chinese themselves apparently admitted:

> The erroneous impressions which prevail in many countries on the subject of China may be attributed either to ignorance of the real state of things, or a desire to invest mere theories with brilliant colours. When you tell any Chinese of cultivated minds what commentary and super-excellent report have been made by European writers, of his countryman's sayings and doings, the state of the empire and the galaxy of virtues which adorn both the monarch and the his people, he laughs aloud at the credulity of strangers, and makes merry with their ignorance of the [Chinese] nature.[88]

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[81] Ibid.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Ibid
[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Ibid.

The *Sydney Guardian's* article, while pretending to be a product of rigorous inquiry, had no real intention of producing any objective knowledge of the Chinese. Apparently, it was generated to counter whatever favourable opinions the colonial Australians had on the Chinese. This precisely was what it did to the employers' portrayal of the Chinese farmers, shepherds and tradesmen as being honest, industrious and tractable. It vehemently denied their worth to the colonial Australian labour economy. As agriculturists, it said the Chinese 'do not yield the palm to the most civilised among their contemporaries, and spare neither care nor exertion in making the soil productive. But, instead of striving after variety, they have one leading object in husbandry—the growth of rice, in favour of which every other grain is laid aside.'[89] As artisans, they were equally useless. They knew nothing about 'fine and useful arts'.[90] The colonial Australians, with their much superior skills and technology, were better off without them.

The treatise was clearly biased against the Chinese right from the start. Its attitude towards them was downright hostile and contemptuous. It dismissed their literature as nothing but a 'gigantic collection' of 'inane' and 'wearisome' ideas.[91] It described their culture as slavish—as slavish as the 'Asiatic' peasantry 'who draw the plough in common with ox'.[92] It claimed that the Chinese were ignorant of the arts and sciences, that they lacked 'common sense and ingenuity', and that they were 'totally deficient in precision and superior taste, and incapable taking generous and exalted views.'[93] Its portrayal of the Chinese Government was much worse—it was said to be despotic, it knew no justice, and valued not individual liberty but the whim of an all powerful emperor

> who is the only proprietor of the soil, the irresponsible disposer of the lives of lieges, and the mediating point between heaven earth: on him devolves the right ordering of all creatures living, and he is responsible for the discharge of this office to his ancestors, and the two potentates heaven and earth. All the tribunals of high and low degree, from his own cabinet downwards to the meanest police appointment in a hamlet, centre equally in the sovereign: he is both their legislature and executive. All penalties are

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[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Ibid.

> expressions of his paternal affections, even though offenders be hewn into pieces, and the greatest acts of injustice be perpetuated...[94]

The *Guardian* actually faulted the Chinese Government for the backwardness of its people. It argued that the government's strict laws and obsession for order more often than not bred savagery and barbarity, rather than civility. 'From their very youth,' it said, 'the Chinese are accustomed to order in everything...There is no nation on earth which pays more profound respect to a whole "legion" of laws, in a theoretical sense; and it is a difficult manner to make them savage; but when once they are urged to fury, they are fiercer than the wildest barbarians.'[95] It was, however, the government imposed isolation which put the Chinese at a great disadvantaged. 'Self sufficiency and the absence of intercourse with other nations of more advanced culture' stunted progress, and kept the Chinese minds stagnant. Hence, the Chinese could not comprehend subjects that required 'depth of thought and investigation', such as religion, 'for though they laugh at idols, they pay them honours: though they are firmly persuaded that they have long since risen superior to idolatry, they do not embrace the pure doctrine of the gospel with an ardour commensurate with their conviction of its excellence.'[96]

Despite these warnings, the employers did not waver in their call for coolie labourers. In mid-1848, notwithstanding the existing government disapprobation, the employers deputised James Tait, a British coolie broker in Amoy, to arrange the first shipment of Chinese coolies to Australia.[97] These coolies, which consisted of 100 men and 21 boys, were said to be 'from the lowest, poorest and most vicious classes.'[98] Their term of engagement was five years, with a monthly wage of $2.50 for the men and $1.50 for the boys, plus rations. As it turned out, there was no legal impediment on coolie immigration anywhere in Australia. The previous pronouncements of the British Government and the New South Wales Government on the matter were not, in any way, legally binding after all. Gipps himself admitted this to Lord Stanley in March 1843. He said: '[T]here is nothing in the Law to prevent the introduction of Coolies into the Colony by individuals, their

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[94] Ibid.
[95] Ibid.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Dwight, "Chinese Labourers to New South Wales," p. 53. See also Cronin, Colonial Casualties, p. 5.
[98] Layton to Bonham, an enclosure in Despatch 35—Grey to Fitzroy, 27 February 1849, Mitchell Library, Sydney, quoted in ibid., p. 53.

importation [however] will not be encouraged by the government, unless indeed the want of Labour should be felt more heavily than it ever yet has been; and that in no case is it to be expected that any assistance from the public funds will be given for the purpose of introducing them.'[99]

The first batch of coolies came to Australia aboard the *Nimrod*.[100] They left China in July 1848 and arrived in Sydney the following October with much fanfare.[101] The bad press on the Chinese, it seemed, did nothing to arouse public opposition. Nothing like the massive protests that marked the arrival of British exiles in 1849 were ever recorded.[102] In fact, huge crowd of curious onlookers eagerly waited at the harbour to receive the disembarking labourers.[103] Newspaper reporters were said to be 'installed in the best vantage points' to cover their disembarkation while the 'less favoured colonists peered and pushed, many of them hoping to catch their view' of the Chinese.[104] The *Sydney Herald* warmly welcomed their arrival. It announced that the coolies, true to the expectations of the employers, were all young and healthy.[105] The same fanfare greeted the coolies on their arrival in Moreton Bay in mid-November 1848, and in Port Phillip in early December 1848.[106]

In all these places, the arrival of the Chinese turned out to be a novel and amusing experience for many colonial Australians. Their initial delight and fascination were vividly encoded in this anonymous newspaper account of the newly arrived Chinese: 'Their heads were shaved with the exception of a patch on the crown about four inches in diameter, from which depended a tail two feet long. A very few of them had the large hats which we are acquainted with, capital substitutes for umbrellas, being nearly three feet in diameter. Their dress appeared invariably black cotton, wide drawers, and an upper dress like a sailor's duckfrock. Their square toed shoes were ornamented with silk on the uppers, and with soles an inch and a quarter thick.'[107] This account's close attention to detail only showed how the

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[99] "Sir George Gipps to Lord Stanley, 27 March 1843," Historical Records of Australia, Series 1, Volume 22, p. 594.
[100] Dwight, "Chinese labourers to new South Wales," p. 53
[101] Ibid.
[102] Hirst, Convict Society and its Enemies, pp. 211-212.
[103] Cronin, Colonial Casualties, p. 4.
[104] Ibid.
[105] Sydney Herald, 2 October 1848.
[106] Dwight, "Chinese labourers to New South Wales," p. 53, and Cronin, Colonial Casualties, p. 4.
[107] Unattributed, quoted in Cronin, Colonial Casualties, p. 4.

Australian spectators subjected the newly-arrived Chinese to their close scrutiny and steady gaze.

Other first impression accounts of the coolies conformed, more or less, to the Orientalist images that were circulating in Australia during the late 1840s. The *Argus*, for example, validated the preconceived notions about the Chinese as being subservient, tractable and docile.[108] It wrote that the newcomers were good-natured and very well-behaved, that they were very unassuming, and that they were 'very little unimpressed' with all the attention and the 'novelty of their position.'[109] They just mingled with each other and 'took especial care of their luggage[s]'.[110] As if to show their industry and eagerness to work, the *Argus* said that the Chinese left for their respective work assignments 'in a high state of delight and excitement'.[111] The *Moreton Bay Courier*, on the other hand, echoed the cheapness and the dependability of the Chinese labourers. It remarked: '[T]hose who have no objection in taking this description of labour [i.e., Chinese coolie labour] in preference to that which is about to arrive [i.e., assisted emigrants from Britain] might find that £15 [the prescribed annual salary of the coolie labourer] was well laid out—the Chinaman always providing honest and useful labour.'[112]

The employers who employed these coolies seemed, at first, generally contented. A satisfied employer even wrote the *Argus* to commend the coolies in his employ. His coolies, he said, possessed all the good qualities of the Chinese, such as 'parental affection, filial piety, veneration for learning, respect for age, submission to rule, and industry.'[113] He specifically commended one coolie whom, he said, had 'hoarded up all [his] earnings with scrupulous care, in order to contribute to the comfort of [his] aged parents.'[114] He complained, however, that the coolies were 'profligate to a frightful extent, [that] chastity is unknown [among them], and [that] they are deficient in probity, in both word and deed.'[115] Another employer defended the coolies from criticisms.[116] He retorted that if the Chinese

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[108] The Argus, 26 December 1848
[109] Ibid.
[110] Ibid.
[111] Ibid.
[112] Moreton Bay Courier, 2 December 1842.
[113] The Argus, 26 December 1848.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Ibid.
[116] "Report of the Select Committee on Asiatic Labour, 27 November 1854," in Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Council of New South Wales, 1854, Volume 2, p. 6.

were indeed addicted to vice, they were certainly no different from many colonial Australians who were no strangers to vices themselves. He remarked: 'I have heard a good deal about [Chinese vices], but I believe that not only are the rumours as to the prevalence of the vice exaggerated but in many instances without foundation. I am not however, prepared to say that it may not exist. I do not know that there is any stronger foundation for the rumours referred to as the Chinese, than for the reports of a similar nature formerly prevalent, regarding the European population of the Colony.'[117] One employer certainly had nothing but praises for his new employees. He wrote:

> The Chinese have now been... with me, seem contented and even happy, and do the same work as Europeans, with whom they are equally intelligent and hardy. They will make excellent shepherd, being equal in attention and superior in willingness and steadiness to the Europeans. Three of them have been for weeks past shepherding, watching 3,700 sheep, and I intended adding greatly to their flocks; this is an open and level country; but in the scrubby and mountainous country where they commenced, the man in charge reported them fit for the usual flock (800) within the month; and as a proof of their intelligence, one who lost himself on the run, and was out he second or third night of shepherding, lit fires around flock, and had the sheep (all weaners) safe in the morning. They are careful, I think, honest, and exceedingly clean, and would doubtless answer well for cooks or in-door servants. I must not omit stating that by their civility they have avoided all quarrelling, and are individually liked by their fellow servants.[118]

These first impressions of the coolies were immediately proven to be wrong. The work-related issues that emerged within a year after they arrived seriously undermined whatever good opinions the colonial Australians had in them. For example, the problem of absconding by the coolies, which became increasingly rampant in 1849, had damaged the Chinese reputation as being docile and efficient workers.[119] Other employers discovered that the Chinese were not as tractable as they were often portrayed to be. These coolies could not be easily imposed on, as W.A. Duncan, a government resident at Brisbane,

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[117] Ibid.
[118] The Argus, 26 December 1848.
[119] Dwight, "Chinese Labourers to New South Wales," pp. 54-55. See also Alan Dwight, "Chinese in New South Wales Law Courts," pp. 75-93.

attested.[120] He said that they were 'avengeful...when either thwarted or annoyed.'[121] They caused so much trouble to the employers by persistently demanding higher wages and better living conditions.[122] Some employers witnessed first hand the bad temper of the Chinese. Cyrus Doyle was attacked by his Chinese servant after failing to honour the demand for a wage increase.[123] A certain Mr. Betelson, a grazier from Moreton Bay, 'suffered a broken nose' after a heated argument with two of his Chinese employers.[124]

Newspaper accounts of the coolies' disruptive behaviours also confirmed the colonial Australians' earlier fears about the savage and vicious nature of the Chinese. A report from the *Corio Chronicle* about some coolies caught in an 'infuriated state of drunkenness' foreshadowed the many later images of the Chinese as purveyors of vice and immorality.[125] One write-up described in gruesome details the violent and quarrelsome nature of these coolies: "[Q]uarrels have arisen between two [Chinese] individuals of different castes, the stronger threw the weaker on the ground, and jumped on his bowels and face, until his eyes protruded and blood simultaneously gushed in streams from his nose, mouths and ears; whilst the others, instead of interfering, stood around, viewing the horrid scene with delight."[126] Another comical but nonetheless highly opinionated newspaper report of an otherwise uneventful incident of brawling involving six coolies reminded colonial Australians about everything disagreeable about the Chinese—their utter disrespect for law and order, their mockery of and irreverence for the Christian Sabbath, their bad temper, their crass and loud behaviour, their cowardice, their lack of intelligence, and most importantly, their dishonesty even in the face of the country's criminal justice system:

> Opui, Bin, Cho Yay, Pin and Obbloo, six ill-favoured Chinamen, were charged with creating a riot in York-street. About 1 p.m. on Sunday, just as the people were pouring out of the churches, the prisoners were fighting in York-street. Inspector Singleton

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[120] Enclosure in Despatch 167—Fitzroy to Newcastle, 30 December 1853. Mitchell Library, Sydney, quoted in Dwight, "Chinese Labourers to New South Wales," p. 57.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Dwight, "Chinese Labourers to New South Wales," p. 55. Cronin, Colonial Casualties, p. 13.
[123] See the full detail of the story in Dwight, "Chinese in New South Wales Lawcourts," pp. 82-83.
[124] Ibid., p. 83. See other accounts of attacks on the employers by their Chinese employees in pp. 83-84, and Rod Fisher, "Roots of Racism: The Chinese Experience in Early Brisbane, 1848-1860," Labour History, 59 (November 1990), pp. 73-82.
[125] Corio Chronicle, 7 February 1849. Cronin, Colonial Casualties, p. 5.
[126] Corio Chronicle, 7 February 1849.

> produced several hoe handles, ax handles, and crow-bars, with which the rat-eating gentry had been fighting. Excepting the annoyance caused to the respectable portion of the community, no mischief occurred, as the Chinese were as chary of jeopardising their precious persons as they were in the last war [i.e., Opium War]. Inspector Singleton knocked the weapons out of the hands of the lot of them, and having hired a person to carry them, he drove the celestials before him to the watch-house. It so happened, as will be seen by the names at the head of this paragraph, that there were six Chinese engaged in the battle, but when arraigned at the bar seven stood up. Then difficulty was found insuperable to find out which was the innocent Chinaman, as they no more recognised their own names than so many bullocks, called Redmane, Brandy, Yellow, &tc. To solve this difficulty the prisoners were remanded until this day. [127]

Not surprisingly, employers' confidence on the Chinese coolies dropped precipitously following these reports. For example, in gathering information about the possibility of employing Chinese coolies in place of the high-salaried European workers, the British directors of the Australian Agricultural Company were told that nothing favourable was heard to encourage the 'experiment', and that the European workers and the Chinese coolies 'did not work together'.[128] And when the company insisted on employing 80 coolies notwithstanding the warning, it discovered too late that the 'docility' of the Chinese was more 'apparent than real'.[129] After his own unpleasant experience with the Chinese coolies, Wentworth, who just a decade earlier created quite a furore by aggressively lobbying for coolie immigration, regretted ever bringing the Chinese to Australia.[130] Others, however, stood by the merits of employing coolies—but not of Chinese coolies—especially in 'sheep-farming, as the intertropical heat [was] too intense

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[127] The Empire, 28 December 1842. Maxine Darnell has recently argued that Chinese coolies in colonial Australia were not always seen and treated as badly as they were often portrayed to be. A good number of coolies had also earned the admiration, affection and respect of their employers. Maxine Darnell, "Life and Labour for Indentured Chinese Shepherds in New South Wales, 1847-1855," Journal of Australian History, 6 (2004): 137-158.

[128] P.A. Pamberton, Pure Merinos and Others: The Shipping List of the Australian Agricultural Company, (Canberra: Australia National University Archives of Business and Labour, 1986), p. 18. See also "Report of the Select Committee on Asiatic Labour, 27 November 1854," in Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Council of New South Wales, 1854, Volume 2, p. 7.

[129] Wilson, "History of the Australian Agricultural Company," p. 8.

[130] "Report of the Select Committee on Asiatic Labour, 27 November 1854," in Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Council of New South Wales, 1854, Volume 2, p. 6. See also Dwight, "Chinese in New South Wales Law Courts, 1848-1854," pp. 87-88.

for the European constitution.'[131] New South Wales sheep farmer Gordon Sandeman, for example, insisted that coolies should be procured not from China but from India. The Indians, he said, were proven to be more superior to the Chinese in terms of 'morals, disposition, habits and general character.' They were more 'sober' and were 'generally honest' compared to the Chinese whose character was observed to be more 'obstinate'.[132]

Meanwhile, the general public's perception towards the Chinese, which had always been unfavourable in the first place, had hardened enormously. The story of the Chinese shepherd who arrested an Aborigine for sexually assaulting a white woman in Bathurst exemplified this toughening of attitude.[133] Far from being regarded as a hero, the unfortunate Good Samaritan was suspected of wanting to 'court vengeance—an eye for an eye—without the recourse to the law'.[134] The magistrate dismissed the poor shepherd as a 'barbarian' who knew nothing about British sense of justice.[135] In Ipswich, the unsavoury reputation of the Chinese, coupled with the white Australian workers' personal and occupational rivalry with the Chinese, fuelled what historian Raymond Evans characterised as the 'first recorded anti-Chinese riot in Australia'.[136] The said riot erupted on 12 March 1851 after a group drunken butchers and coopers assaulted four Chinese coolies for no apparent reason other than the fact that they were Chinese.[137] In the ensuing melee, two coolies were mortally wounded, and none of the butchers and coopers was hurt. Interestingly, the Ipswich residents who witnessed the incident emphatically sided with their unscathed compatriots. One resident was even quoted as saying: 'It was…a shame and pity that white men should be punished for maltreating those uncouth and unpopular foreigners.'[138] Apparently they thought that the violence toward the Chinese was justified because they were savages anyway.

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[131] "Report of the Select Committee on Asiatic Labour, 27 November 1854," in Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Council of New South Wales, 1854, Volume 2, p. 3.
[132] Ibid., p. 7.
[133] For the full details of this case, see Dwight, "Chinese in New South Wales Lawcourts," p. 82.
[134] Ibid.
[135] Ibid.
[136] Raymond Evans, "Keeping Australia Clean White," in Verity Burgmann and Jenny Lee, editors, A Most Valuable Acquisition: A People's History of Australia Since 1788, (Ringwood: Penguin Books, 1988), p. 179. See also Fisher's account of the riot, "Roots of Racism," p. 79.
[137] Evans, "Keeping Australia Clean White," pp. 179-180.
[138] Moreton Bay Courier, 23 November 1851. Evans, "Keeping Australia Clean White," p. 180.

The New South Wales Government took notice of the issues generated by the introduction of Chinese coolies only in the middle of 1854. It organised a Select Committee on Asiatic labour to look into the matter more closely. By this time, however, the demand for the Chinese coolies among employers had already been in steady decline. In fact, according to historian Alan Dwight, this downward trend had been going on since 1852.[139] Nevertheless, the Select Committee decided against the immigration of Chinese coolies, a decision which prefigured the succeeding legislations that restricted Chinese immigration into Australia. It said that 'all ideas of Asiatic immigration' should be totally abandoned, '[i]t is admitted on all hands that the experiment of Chinese has disappointed the expectations of those who at one time strongly advocated their introduction'.[140]

[139] Dwight, "Chinese Labourers to New South Wales," p. 57.
[140] "Report of the Select Committee on Asiatic Labour, 27 November 1854," in Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Council of New South Wales, 1854, Volume 2, p. 5.

Conclusion

This thesis argues for an interpretative shift in the way the history of the Chinese in 19th century Australia is being viewed and written. It demonstrates the limits of the racism framework which students of Chinese Australian history have long been using to explain the differential treatment of the Chinese immigrants by the white Australian settlers. Such a framework draws attention to the hostility with which the settlers regarded the Chinese, but does not illuminate very well the reasons for or particular content of that hostility. For that, the approach proposed by Edward Said, emphasising the discourse of Orientalism, is extremely valuable. Like racism, the discourse of Orientalism is premised on the superiority of the Europeans: it categorises, inferiorises and essentialises. But unlike racism, Orientalism also demarcates the differences between the Europeans and the Orientals. It creates and circulates a body of knowledge about the 'inferior' peoples of the Orient, knowledge that is often negative, adverse, and unflattering. It subverts, discriminates, vilifies and marks the undesirability of the Orient/Orientals. Hostility is perpetuated and legitimised as the Orient/Orientals are projected and seen as a harmful presence that affects social order.

The prevailing Orientalist knowledge of the Chinese appears to be a major reason for the anti-Chinese agitations in the 1840s and early 1850s Australia. Orientalism inferiorised the Chinese even before they could set foot in Australia. Images of the Chinese as despotic, unreliable, aberrant, anomalous, backward—characteristics which the West had traditionally ascribed to all the Orientals—fostered not only negative opinion in an abstract sense, but also underlay resentment toward the Chinese coolies who arrived in growing numbers beginning 1848. This Orientalised knowledge underlay subsequent interactions between colonisers and Chinese. The failure of the coolies, for example, to live up to their Orientalised reputation as submissive and deferential workers provoked even more ill-feelings and enmity. All segments of colonial Australian society — from the employers who earlier had lobbied hard to bring the Chinese to the colonies, through to the artisans and workers — now came to deem the Chinese coolies as undesirable. The Chinese coolies had been so vilified in the public's minds that injury to their person and property was considered justified. In 1854, the New South Wales Legislative Council opined that Chinese should not be allowed to immigrate to Australia.

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